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CURIOSITIES

OF

LONDON LIFE:

OR,

Phases, Physiological and Social,

OF

THE GREAT METROPOLIS.

1900
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BY

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AUTHOR OF

"THE WORKING-MAN'S WAY IN THE WORLD."

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PREFACE.

It has been my custom for many years past to regard the Streets of London as an open book, in which he that runs to and fro may read as he goes along, gathering not merely amusement and excitement, but valuable instruction too, from its ever varying pages. From time to time, as the opportunity of leisure has been afforded me, I have, often in the intervals of severe toil, jotted down the results of such observations as I was enabled to make, and transmitted them through the post to the editors of various periodicals, who, for reasons best known to themselves, have encouraged me, far more liberally than I either anticipated or deserved, to continue the practice. These contributions to the serial literature of the day have, in the course of the last six or seven years, grown by degrees to a considerable bulk; and, moved by the favour which some of them have met with, and by the flattering reception which has been accorded to a volume of personal memoirs, I am encouraged to test still further [illegible]ture of the Public.

In the "Working-Man's Way in the World" I had to draw upon my own experience for materials; and I cut short my tale when that experience no longer afforded matter which could be considered interesting to the general reader. But in the following papers I have had the experience of others to deal with,—so far, that is, as it was patent to observation—and the task of recording it has been one of more pleasure and less difficulty. The ways of men in London present an inexhaustible subject for the sketcher, whether he work with the pencil or the pen. The field is so large—the variety so great—there is so much of the picturesque in form, and of the characteristic and suggestive in manners, habits, and modes of life, that that groatless individual, the "man of observation," need never be at a loss for an object or a subject upon which to exercise his speculative tendencies, or his descriptive talent—if he have any. In assuming this character myself, and while indulging in the pleasure of delineating such humble phases of our social and artificial condition as the reader will find in the following pages, I have kept two things constantly in view. In the first place, I have cautiously refrained from knowingly overstepping the limits of fact—because, whatever merits a work professedly descriptive of human life and conduct may possess, it cannot lack fidelity and be of any real value. In the second place, I have endeavoured, however trivial the topics, to clothe each one

in something resembling at least a literary garb. It is true there was no other necessity for this than the necessity, perhaps, of my own vanity or capricious fancy—but which was so far imperative, that had I not written in this way, I should not have written at all. The reader may, however, rely upon the truth of the details he will here peruse. The only fictions are those harmless and transparent ones in which the writer has chosen sometimes, for obvious reasons, to involve both himself and some designations of persons and places which it would not have been prudent to call by their real names. The several characters on his canvas are all studies from the life, and the back-grounds in which they figure may be verified at any hour by the dweller in London. In some few cases, where personal narratives are given, they are in substance the actual experience of the personages to whom they are attributed—with the exception of one or two, the living prototypes of which only supplied a general outline, which it was left to imagination to fill up.

With regard to one of these characters, the "Blind Fiddler," whose history, recorded in his own words, will be found at page 80, I may be allowed in this place to return my acknowledgments to those unknown but benevolent friends who, instigated by the publication of his story in "Chambers's Journal," forwarded to me the means of ameliorating in some degree the

hard conditions of his lot. It is a pleasant task to return thanks for unsolicited kindness to an unfortunate stranger; and there is no valid reason why I should not couple it with another pleasure—that of returning my compliments to a coterie of "respectable" rascals who promised to break my head for exposing the villany of the "Knock-Out."

Having thus briefly discharged my obligations to friends and foes, nothing remains but to commend my book to the kind courtesies of the gentle reader, and "still more gentle purchaser" into whose hands it may chance to fall.

Islington, Oct. 1853.

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"I will take you where you will see what London is made of."—*Game of Life.*

CURIOSITIES OF LONDON LIFE.

We are going to lift the curtain, and present to the gaze of the Public many a varied scene in the strange drama of London life and experience. As all dramatic representations are preceded by a musical performance, and an audience looks for that as naturally as for any other part of the bill of fare, it is plain that we cannot do better than to call upon the members of our company to perform their own overture, preparatory to the entrance upon the stage of the several actors, who are summoned to play their parts for the general amusement and edification. Though some of our musicians are veritable curiosities in themselves, we have no other reason for giving them the precedence on the present occasion, than such as are suggested by the proprieties of the drama,—"Ting—ting—ting"—the bell rings for the overture. It must be played by the

MUSIC-GRINDERS OF THE METROPOLIS.

Perhaps the pleasantest of all the outdoor accessories of a London life, are the strains of fugitive music which one hears in the quiet bye-streets or suburban highways—strains born [illegible] of some of our wandering artists, who, with flute,

violin, harp, or brazen tube of various shape and designation, make the brick-walls of the busy city responsive with the echoes of harmony. Many a time and oft have we lingered, entranced by the witchery of some street Orpheus, forgetful, not merely of all the troubles of existence, but of existence itself, until the strain had ceased, and silence aroused us to the matter-of-fact world of business. One blind fiddler, we know him well, with face upturned toward the sky, has stood a public benefactor any day these twenty years, and we know not how much longer, to receive the substantial homage of the music-loving million: but that he is scarcely old enough, he might have been the identical Oxford-street Orpheus of Wordsworth:—

> "His station is there; and he works on the crowd;
> He sways them with harmony merry and loud;
> He fills with his power all their hearts to the brim;
> Was aught ever heard like his fiddle and him?"

Decidedly not—there is nothing to match it; and so thinks "the one-pennied boy" who spares him his one penny, and deems it well bestowed. Then there are the harpers, with their smooth French-horn-breathing and piccolo-piping comrades, who at the soothing hour of twilight affect the tranquil and retired paved courts or snug enclosures, far from the roar and rumble of chariot-wheels, where, clustered round with lads and lasses released from the toils of the day, they dispense romance and sentiment, and harmonious cadences, in exchange for copper compliments and the well-merited applause of fit audiences, though few. Again; there are the valorous brass-bands of the young Germans, who blow such spirit-stirring appeals from their travel-worn and battered tubes—to say nothing of the thousand performers of solos and duets, who, wherever there is the chance of a moment's hearing, are ready to attempt their seductions upon our ea[illegible] to the prejudice of our pockets. All these we must pass o[illegible] with this brief mention upon the present occasion; our busi[illegible]

ness being with their numerous antitheses and would-be rivals—the incarnate nuisances who fill the air with discordant and fragmentary mutilations and distortions of heaven-born melody, to the distraction of educated ears and the perversion of the popular taste.

"Music by handle," as it has been facetiously termed, forms our present subject. This kind of harmony, which is not too often deserving of the name, still constitutes, notwithstanding the large amount of indisputable talent which derives its support from the gratuitous contributions of the public, by far the larger proportion of the peripatetic minstrelsy of the metropolis. It would appear that these grinders of music, with some few exceptions which we shall notice as we proceed, are distinguished from their praiseworthy exemplars, the musicians, by one remarkable, and to them perhaps very comfortable, characteristic. Like the exquisite Charles Lamb —if his curious confession were not a literary myth,—they have ears, but no ear, though they would hardly be brought to acknowledge the fact so candidly as he did. They may be divided, so far as our observation goes, into the following classes:—1. Hand-organists; 2. Monkey-organists; 3. Hand-barrow-organists; 4. Handcart-organists; 5. Horse-and-cart-organists; 6. Blind bird-organists; 7. Piano-grinders; 8. Flageolet-organists and pianists; 9. Hurdy-gurdy players.

1. The hand-organist is most frequently a Frenchman of the departments, nearly always a foreigner. If his instrument be good for anything, and he have a talent for forming a connection, he will be found to have his regular rounds, and may be met with any hour in the week, at the same spot he occupied at that hour on the week previous. But a man so [illegible]need is at the head of the vagabond profession, the [illegible]t of whom wander at their own sweet will wherever [illegible]ay guide. The hand-organ which they lug about [illegible]value from £10 to £150—at least, this last-named [illegible] the cost of a first-rate instrument thirty years ago,

such as were borne about by the street-organists of Bath and Cheltenham, and the fashionable watering-places, and the grinders of the West End of London, at that period, when musical talent was much less common than it is now. We have seen a contract for repairs to one of these instruments, including a new stop and new barrels, amounting to the liberal sum of £75: it belonged to a man who had grown so impudent in prosperity, as to incur the penalty of seven years' banishment from the town in which he turned his handle, for the offence of thrashing a young nobleman, who stood between him and his auditors too near for his sense of dignity. Since the invention of the metal reed, however, which, under various modifications and combinations, supplies the sole utterance of the harmonicon, celestina, seraphina, colophon, accordion, concertina, &c., &c., and which does away with the necessity for pipes, the street hand-organ has assumed a different and infinitely worse character. Some of them yet remain what the old Puritans called "boxes of whistles"—that is, they are all pipes; but many of them might with equal propriety be called "boxes of Jews' harps," being all reeds, or rather vibrating metal tongues—and more still are of a mixed character, having pipes for the upper notes, and metal reeds for the bass. The effect is a succession of sudden hoarse brays as an accompaniment to a soft melody, suggesting the idea of a duet between Titania and Bottom. But this is far from the worst of it. The profession of hand-organist having of late years miserably declined, being in fact, at present, the next grade above mendicancy, the element of cheapness has, per force, been studied in the manufacture of the instrument. The barrels of some are so villanously pricked, that the time is altogether broken, the ear is assailed with a minim in the place of a quaver, and *vice versâ*; and occasionally, as a matter of convenience, a bar is left out, or even one is repeated, in total disregard of suffering humanity. But, what is worse than these metal reeds, which are the most untunable things in

whole range of sound-producing material, are constantly, from contact with fog and moisture, getting out of order; and howl dolorously as they will, in token of their ailments, their half-starved guardian, who will grind half an hour for a penny, cannot afford to medicate their pains, even if he is aware of them, which, judging from his placid composure, during the most infamous combination of discords, is very much to be questioned.*

2. The monkey-organist is generally a native of Switzerland or the Tyrol. He carries a worn-out, doctored, and flannel-swathed instrument, under the weight of which, being but a youth, or very rarely an adult, he staggers slowly along, with outstretched back and bended knees. On the top of his old organ sits a monkey, or sometimes a marmoset, to whose queer face and queerer tricks he trusts for compensating the defective quality of his music. He dresses his shivering brute in a red jacket and a cloth cap; and, when he can, he teaches him to grind the organ, to the music of which he will himself dance wearily. He wears an everlasting smile upon his countenance, indicative of humour, natural, and not assumed for the occasion; and though he invariably unites the profession of a beggar with that of monkey-master and musician, he has evidently no faith in a melancholy face, and does not think it absolutely necessary to make you thoroughly miserable in order to excite your charity. He will leave his monkey

* Among some of the continental nations, Justice, though blind, is not supposed to be deaf; she has, on the contrary, a musical ear, and compels the various grinders of harmony to keep their instruments in tune, under the penalty of a heavy fine. In some of the German cities, the police have summary jurisdiction in offences musical, and are empowered to demand a certificate, with which every grinder is bound to be furnished, showing the date of the last tuning of his instrument. We are not aware that consecutive fifths are punished by a month at the treadmill, but if he perpetrate false harmony, and his monkey be run out, he is mulcted in the fine. Such a bye-law would [illegible] in London.

grinding away on a door-step, and follow you with a grinning face, for a hundred yards or more, singing in a kind of recitative, "Date qualche cosa, signor! per amor di Dio, eccellenza, date qualche cosa!". If you comply with his request, his voluble thanks are too rapid for your comprehension; and if you refuse, he laughs merrily in your face as he turns away to rejoin his friend and coadjutor. He is a favourite subject with the young artists about town, especially if he is very good-looking, or, better still, excessively ugly; and he picks up many a shilling for sitting, standing, or sprawling on the ground, as a model in the studio. It sometimes happens that he has no organ, his monkey being his only stock in trade. When the monkey dies—and one sees by their melancholy comicalities, and cautious and painful grimaces, that the poor brutes are destined to a short time of it—he takes up with white mice, or, lacking these, constructs a dancing-doll, which, with the aid of a short plank with an upright at one end, to which is attached a cord, passing through the body of the doll, and fastened to his right leg, he keeps constantly on the jig, to the music of a tuneless tin whistle, bought for a penny, and a very primitive parchment tabor, manufactured by himself. These shifts he resorts to in the hope of retaining his independence and personal freedom—failing to succeed in which, he is driven, as a last resource, to the comfortless drudgery of piano-grinding, which we shall have to notice in its turn.

3. The handbarrow-organist is not uncommonly some lazy Irishman, if he be not a sickly Savoyard, who has mounted his organ upon a handbarrow of light and somewhat peculiar construction, for the sake of facilitating the task of locomotion. From the nature of his equipage, he is not given to grinding so perpetually as his heavily-burdened brethren. He cannot of course grind, as they occasionally do, as he travels along, so he pursues a different system of tactics. He walks leisurely along the quiet ways, turning his eyes constantly to

the right and left, on the look-out for a promising opening. The sight of a group of children at a parlour-window brings him into your front garden, where he establishes his instrument with all the deliberation of a proprietor of the premises. He is pretty sure to begin his performance in the middle of a tune, with a hiccoughing kind of sound, as though the pipes were gasping for breath. He puts a sudden period to his questionable harmony the very instant he gets his penny, having a notion, which is tolerably correct, that you pay him for his silence and not for his sounds. In spite of his discordant gurglings and squealings, he is welcomed by the nursery-maids and their infant tribes of little sturdy rogues in petticoats, who flock eagerly round him, and purchase the luxury of a half-penny grind, which they perform *con amore*, seated on the top of his machine. If, when your front garden is thus invaded, you insist upon his decamping without a fee, he shows his estimate of the peace and quietness you desiderate by his unwillingness to retire, which, however, he at length consents to do, though not without a muttered remonstrance, delivered with the air of an injured man. He generally contrives to house himself as night draws on, in some dingy tap-room appertaining to the lowest class of Tom-and-Jerry shops, where, for a few coppers and "a few beer," he will ring all the changes on his instrument twenty times over, until he and his admiring auditors are ejected at midnight by the police-fearing landlord.

4. The handcart-organists are a race of a very different and more enterprising character, and of much more lofty and varied pretensions. They generally travel in firms of two, three, or even four partners, drawing the cart by turns. Their equipage consists of an organ of very complicated construction, containing, besides a deal of very marvellous machinery within its entrails, a collection of bells, drums, triangles, gongs, and cymbals, in addition to the usual quantity of pipes and metal-reeds that go to make up the travelling organ.

The music they play is of a species which it is not very easy to describe, as it is not once in a hundred times that a stranger can detect the melody through the clash and clangor of the gross amount of brass, steel, and bell-metal put in vibration by the machinery. This, however, is of very little consequence, as it is not the music in particular which forms the principal attraction: if it serve to call a crowd together, that is sufficient for their purpose; and it is for this reason, we imagine, that the effect of the whole is contrived to resemble, as it very closely does, the hum and jangle of Greenwich Fair when heard of an Easter Monday from the summit of the Observatory Hill. No, the main attraction is essentially dramatic. In front of the great chest of heterogeneous sounds there is a stage about five or six feet in width, four in height, and perhaps eighteen inches or two feet in depth. Upon this are a variety of figures, about fourteen inches long, gorgeously arrayed in crimson, purple, emerald-green, blue, and orange draperies, and loaded with gold and tinsel, and sparkling stones and spangles, all doubled in splendour by the reflection of a mirror in the background. The figures, set in motion by the same machinery which grinds the incomprehensible overture, perform a drama equally incomprehensible. At the left-hand corner is Daniel in the lion's den, the lion opening his mouth in six-eight time, and an angel with outspread wings, but securely transfixed through the loins by a revolving brass pivot, shutting it again to the same lively movement. To the right of Daniel is the Grand Turk, seated in his divan, and brandishing a dagger over a prostrate slave, who only ventures to rise when the dagger is withdrawn. Next to him is Nebuchadnezzar on all fours, eating painted grass, with a huge gold crown on his head, which he bobs for a bite every other bar. In the right-hand corner is a sort of cavern, the abode of some supernatural and mysterious being of the fiend or vampire school, who gives an occasional fitful start, and turns an ominous-looking green-glass eye out upon

the spectators. All these are in the background. In the front of the stage stands Napoleon, wearing a long sword and a cocked hat, and the conventional grey smalls—his hand of course stuck in his breast. At his right are Tippoo Saib and his sons, and at his left, Queen Victoria and Prince Albert. After a score or so of bars, the measure of the music suddenly alters—Daniel's guardian angel flies off—the prophet and the lion lie down to sleep together—the Grand Turk sinks into the arms of the death-doomed slave—Nebuchadnezzar falls prostrate on the ground, and the fiend in the gloomy cavern whips suddenly round and glares with his green eye, as if watching for a spring upon the front row of actors, who have now taken up their cue and commenced their performance. Napoleon, Tippoo Saib, and Queen Victoria dance a three-handed reel, to the admiration of Prince Albert and a group of lords and ladies in waiting, who nod their heads approvingly—when br'r'r! crack! at a tremendous crash of gongs and grumbling of bass-notes, the fiend in the corner rushes forth from his lair with a portentous howl. Away, neck or nothing, flies Napoleon, and Tippoo scampers after him, followed by the terrified attendants; but lo! at the precise nick of time, Queen Victoria draws a long sword from beneath her stays, while up jumps the devouring beast from the den of the prophet, and like a true British lion—as he doubtless was all the while—flies at the throat of the fiend, straight as an arrow to its mark. Then follows a roar of applause from the discriminating spectators, amidst which the curtain falls, and, with an extra flourish of music, the collection of copper coin commences. This is always a favourite spectacle with the multitude, who never bother themselves about such trifles as anachronisms and unities; and the only difficulty the managers have to overcome in order to insure a remunerative exhibition is, that of finding a quiet locality, which shall yet be sufficiently frequented to insure them an audience. There are equipages of this description of very various pretensions

and perfection, but they all combine the allurements of music and the drama in a greater or less degree.

5. The horse-and-cart-organists are a race of enterprising speculators, who, relying on the popular penchant for music, have undertaken to supply the demand by wholesale. It is impossible by mere description to impart an adequate idea of the truly appalling and tremendous character of their performances. Their machines are some of them vast structures, which, mounted upon stout wheels, and drawn by a couple of serviceable horses, might be mistaken for wild beast vans. They are crammed choke-full with every known mechanical contrivance for the production of ear-stunning noises. Wherever they burst forth into utterance, the whole parish is instantly admonished of their whereabouts, and, with the natural instinct of John Bull for a row—no matter how it originates—forth rushes the crowd to enjoy the dissonance. The piercing notes of a score of shrill fifes, the squall of as many clarions, the hoarse bray of a legion of tin trumpets, the angry and fitful snort of a brigade of rugged bassoons, the unintermitting rattle of a dozen or more deafening drums, the clang of bells firing in peals, the boom of gongs, with the sepulchral roar of some unknown contrivance for bass, so deep that you might almost count the vibrations of each note—these are a few of the components of the horse-and-cart-organ, the sum-total of which it is impossible to add up. Compared to the vicinity of a first-rater in full blow, the inside of a menagerie at feeding-time would be a paradise of tranquillity and repose. The rattle and rumble of carts and carriages, which drive the professors and possessors of milder music to the side-streets and suburbs, sink into insignificance when these cataracts of uproar begin to peal forth; and their owners would have no occasion to seek an appropriate spot for their volcanic eruptions, were it not that the police, watchful against accident, have warned them from the principal thoroughfares, where serious consequences have already ensued through the

panic occasioned to horses from the continuous explosion of such unwonted sounds. In fact, an honourable member of the Commons' House of Parliament made a motion in the House, not long ago, for the immediate prohibition of these monster nuisances, and quoted several cases of alarm and danger to life of which they had been the originating cause. These formidable erections are for the most part the property and handiwork of the men who travel with them, and who must levy a pretty heavy contribution on the public to defray their expenses. They perform entire overtures and long concerted pieces, being furnished with spiral barrels, and might probably produce a tolerable effect at the distance of a mile or so — at least we never heard one yet without incontinently wishing it a mile off. By a piece of particular ill-fortune, we came one day upon one undergoing the ceremony of tuning, on a piece of waste-ground at the back of Coldbath Prison. The deplorable wail of those tortured pipes and reeds, and the short savage grunt of the bass mystery, haunted us, a perpetual day-and-night-mare, for a month. We could not help noticing, however, that the jauntily-dressed fellow, whose fingers were covered with showy rings, and ears hung with long drops, who performed the operation, managed it with consummate skill, and with an ear for that sort of music most marvellously discriminating.

6. Blind bird-organists. Though most blind persons either naturally possess or soon acquire an ear for music, there are yet numbers who, from the want of it, or from some other cause, never make any proficiency as performers on an instrument. Blindness, too, is often accompanied with some other disability, which disqualifies its victims for learning such trades as they might otherwise be taught. Hence many, rather than remain in the workhouse, take to grinding music in the streets. Here we are struck with one remarkable fact: the Irishman, the Frenchman, the Italian, or the Savoyard, at least so soon as he is a man, and able to lug it about, is

provided with an instrument with which he can make a noise in the world, and prefer his clamorous claim for a recompense; while the poor blind Englishman has nothing but a diminutive box of dilapidated whistles, which you may pass fifty times without hearing it, let him grind as hard as he will. It is generally nothing more than an old worn-out bird organ, in all likelihood charitably bestowed by some compassionate Poll Sweedlepipes, who has already used it up in the education of his bullfinches. The reason, we opine, must be that the major part, if not the whole, of the peripatetic instruments of the metropolis are the property of speculators, who let them out on hire, and that the blind man, not being considered an eligible customer, is precluded from the advantage of their use. However this may be, the poor blind grinder is almost invariably found furnished as we have described him, jammed up in some cranny or corner in a third-rate locality, where, having opened or taken off the top of his box, that the curious spectator may behold the mystery of his too quiet music—the revolving barrel, the sobbing bellows, and the twelve leaden and ten wooden pipes—he turns his monotonous handle throughout the live-long day, in the all but vain appeal for the commiseration of his fellows. This is really a melancholy spectacle, and one which we would gladly miss altogether in our casual rounds.

7. The piano-grinders are by far the most numerous of the handle-turning fraternity. The instrument they carry about with them is familiar to the dwellers in most of the towns in England. It is a miniature cabinet-piano, without the keys or finger-board, and is played by similar mechanical means to that which gives utterance to the hand-organ; but of course it requires no bellows. There is one thing to be said in favour of these instruments—they do not make much noise, and consequently are no very great nuisance individually. The worst thing against them is the fact, that they are never in tune, and therefore never worth the hearing. After grinding for

twelve or fourteen hours a day for four or five years, they become perfect abominations; and luckless is the fate of the poor little stranger condemned to perpetual companionship with a villanous machine, whose every tone is the cause of offence to those whose charity he must awaken into exercise, or go without a meal. These instruments are known to be the property of certain extensive proprietors in the city, some of whom have hundreds of them grinding daily in every quarter of the town. Some few are let out on hire—the best at a shilling a day; the old worn-out ones as low as two or three pence; but the great majority of them are ground by young Italians shipped to this country for the special purpose by the owners of the instruments. These descendants of the ancient Romans figure in Britain in a very different plight from that of their renowned ancestors. They may be encountered in troops sallying forth from the filthy purlieus of Leather Lane, at about nine or ten in the morning, each with his awkward burden strapped to his back, and supporting his steps with a stout staff, which also serves to support the instrument when playing. Each one has his appointed beat, and he is bound to bring home a certain prescribed sum to entitle him to a share in the hot supper prepared for the evening meal. We have more than once, when startled by the sound of the everlasting piano within an hour of midnight, questioned the belated grinder, and invariably received for answer, that he had not yet been able to collect the sum required of him. Still there can be no doubt that some of them contrive to save money; inasmuch as we occasionally see an active fellow set up on his own account, and furnished with an instrument immensely superior to those of his less prosperous compatriots. So great is the number of these wandering Italian pianists, that their condition has attracted the attention of their more wealthy countrymen, who, in conjunction with a party of benevolent English gentlemen, have set on foot an association for the express purpose of imparting instruction

to poor Italians of all grades, of whom the vagabond musicians form the largest section.

It is easy to recognise the rule adopted in the distribution of the instruments among the grinders: the stoutest fellow, or he who can take the best care of it, gets the best piano; while the shattered and rickety machine goes to the urchin of ten or twelve, who can scarcely drag it a hundred yards without resting. It is to be supposed that the instruments are all rated according to their quality. There is at this moment wandering about the streets of London a singular and pitiable object, whose wretched lot must be known to hundreds of thousands, and who affords in his own person good evidence of the strictness of the rule above alluded to, as well as of the rigour with which the trade is carried on. We refer to a ragged, shirtless, and harmlessly insane Italian lad, who, under the guardianship of one of the piano-mongers, is driven forth daily into the streets, carrying a blackened and gutted old piano-case, in which two strings only of the original scale remain unbroken. The poor unwashed innocent transports himself as quickly as possible to the genteelest neighbourhood he can find, and with all the enthusiasm of a Jullien, commences his monotonous grind. Three turns of the handle, and the all but defunct instrument ejaculates "tink;" six more inaudible turns, and then the responding string answers "tank." "Tink—tank" is the sum-total of his performance, to any defects in which he is as insensible as a blind man is to colour. As a matter of course, he gets ill-treated, mobbed, pushed about, and upset by the blackguard scamps about town; and were it not for the police, who have rescued him times without number from the hands of his persecutors, he would long ere now have been reduced to as complete a ruin as his instrument. In one respect he is indeed already worse off than the dilapidated piano: he is dumb as well as silly, and can only utter one sound—a cry of alarm of singular intensity; this cry forms the climax of pleasure to the wretches who dog his steps, and this, unmoved

by his silent tears and woful looks, they goad him to shriek forth for their express gratification. We have stumbled upon him at near eleven o'clock at night, grinding away with all his might in a storm of wind and rain, perfectly unconscious of either, and evidently delighted at his unusual freedom from interruption.

8. Flageolet-organists and pianists. It is a pleasure to award praise where praise is due, and it may be accorded to this class of grinders, who are, to our minds, the *élite* of the profession. We stated above that some of the piano-grinders contrive, notwithstanding their difficult position, to save money and set up for themselves. It is inevitable that the faculty of music must be innate with some of these wandering pianists, and it is but natural that these should succeed the best, and be the first to improve their condition. The instrument which combines the flageolet-stop with the piano is generally found in the possession of young fellows who, by dint of a persevering and savage economy, have saved sufficient funds to procure it. Indeed, in common hands, it would be of less use than the commonest instrument, because it requires frequent—more than daily—tuning, and would therefore be of no advantage to a man with no ear. Unless the strings were in strict unison with the pipes, the discordance would be unbearable; and as this in the open air can hardly be the case for many hours together, they have to be rectified many times in the course of a week. As might be reasonably supposed, these instruments are comparatively few. When set to slow melodies, the flageolet taking the air, and the piano a well-arranged accompaniment, the effect is really charming, and there is little reason to doubt, is found as profitable to the producer as it is pleasing to the hearer. They are to be met with chiefly at the West End of the town, and on summer evenings beneath the lawyers' windows in the neighbourhood of some of the Inns of Court.

9. The hurdy-gurdy player. We have placed this genius

last, because, though essentially a most horrid grinder he too, is, in some sort, a performer. In London there may be said to be two classes of them—little hopping, skipping, jumping, reeling, Savoyard or Swiss urchins, who dance and sing, and grind and play, doing, like Cæsar, four things at once, and whom you expect every moment to see rolling on the pavement, but who contrive, like so many kittens, to pitch on their feet at last, notwithstanding all their antics—and men with sallow complexions, large dark eyes, and silver ear-rings, who stand erect and tranquil, and confer a dignity, not to say a grace, even upon the performance of the hurdy-gurdy. The boys for the most part do not play any regular tune, having but few keys to their instruments, often not even a complete octave. The better instruments of the adult performers have a scale of an octave and a half, and sometimes two octaves, and they perform melodies and even harmonies with something like precision, and with an effect which, to give it its due praise, supplies a very tolerable caricature of the Scotch bagpipes. These gentry are not much in favour either with the genuine lovers of music or the lovers of quiet, and they know the fact perfectly well. They hang about the crowded haunts of the common people, and find their harvest in a vulgar jollification, or an extempore "hop" at the door of a suburban public house on a summer night. There are a few old-women performers on this hybrid machine, one of whom is familiar to the public through the dissemination of her *vera effigies* in Mr. Mayhew's "*London Labour and London Poor.*"

The above are all the grinders which observation has enabled us to identify as capable of classification. The reader may, if he likes, suppose them to be the metropolitan representatives of the Nine Muses—and that, in fact, in some sort they are, seeing that they are the embodiments to a certain extent of the musical tastes of a section at least of the inhabitants of London; though, if we are asked which is Melpomene? which

is Thalia? &c., &c., we must adopt the reply of the showman to the child who asked which was the lion and which was the dog, and received for answer, "Whichever you like, my little dear."

With respect to all these grinders, one thing is remarkable: they are all, with the exception of a small savour of Irishmen, foreigners. Scarcely one Englishman, not one Scot, will be found among the whole tribe; and this fact is as welcome to us as it is singular, because it speaks volumes in favour of the national propensity, of which we have reason to be proud, to be ever doing something, producing something, applying labour to its legitimate purpose, and not turning another man's handle to grind the wind. Yet there is, alas! a scattered and characteristic tribe of vagabond English music-grinders, and to these we must turn a moment's attention ere we finally close the list. We must call them, for we know no more appropriate name, cripple-grinders. It is impossible to carry one's explorations very far through the various districts of London without coming upon one or more samples of this unfortunate tribe. Commerce maims and mutilates her victims as effectually as war, though not in equal numbers; and men and lads without arms, or without legs, or without either, and men doubled up and distorted, and blasted blind and hideous with gunpowder, who have yet had the misfortune to escape death, are left without limbs or eyesight, often with shattered intellects, to fight the battle of life at fearful odds. Had they been reduced to a like miserable condition while engaged in killing their fellow-creatures on the field of battle or on the deck of carnage, a grateful country would have housed them in a palace, and abundantly supplied their every want; but they were merely employed in procuring the necessaries of life for their fellows in the mine or the factory, and as nobody owes them any gratitude for that, they must do what they can. And behold what they do: they descend, being fit for nothing

else, to the level of the foreign music-grinder, and, mounted on a kind of bed-carriage, are drawn about the streets of London by their wives or children, being furnished with a blatant hand-organ of last century's manufacture, whose ear-torturing growl draws the attention of the public to their woful plight, they extort that charity which would else fail to find them out. If there be something gratifying in the fact, that this is the only class of Britons who follow such an inglorious profession, there is nothing very flattering in the consideration, that even these are compelled to it by inexorable necessity.

STRUGGLES FOR LIFE.

Among two millions of inhabitants congregated within the space of a few square miles, there must exist a large class with whom the struggle for existence is a constant warfare with adversity and difficulties of every kind. Hence it follows that we are occasionally struck by the ingenuity displayed in the various expedients to which the very poor have recourse to procure the means of living—expedients which would never be practised but under the stimulus of a constant and pressing necessity; and which would be of no avail, if they were, under any other social conditions than those which an overcrowded metropolis exclusively presents. Of the myriad causes of poverty which drive men to avail themselves of any and every resource which offers itself to gain a livelihood, it were of little use to speculate. Multitudes with industrious hands and willing hearts, are either standing idle in the market-place, or doing what no man enjoined them to do, in the hope of winning even a bare crust to satisfy the wants of the hour. Many are from time to time thrown out of employment by new inventions and discoveries; and many more are next to destitute from an error in the choice of a profession, and their inability to attain proficiency in their craft. These last, after numberless attempts and defeats, and many and bitter mortifications, give up the matter in despair, and go to swell the ranks of the unemployable and supernumerary class. What becomes of all these, and how their wants are supplied, is a mystery not easily fathomable. "Ten men," says a German

proverb, "cannot tell you how the eleventh lives." The following brief sketches may contribute in some degree to clear up a portion of the mystery.

THE DUCK-WEED HAWKER.

Walking one day by the river side, in the neighbourhood of Battersea, sketch-book in hand, and meditating a design upon the Red House, I was attracted by a picturesque-looking figure, busily engaged in raking the surface of a stagnant pool. By his side, on the bank, stood an old wine-hamper, reeking with muddy ooze. Feeling curious to ascertain what was going forward, I approached the operator, and civilly questioned him as to his proceeding. The following dialogue may give the reader an idea of a branch of industry which I confess was unknown to me till then.

"My good fellow, if I may be so bold, what is it you are doing?"

"Oh, bless your honour! no harm. I only vants the duck-weed you see, sir; and they never sets no wally on it, so I gits it for nuffin."

"But of what use is that green scum, or duck-weed, as you call it?"

"Did yer honour never keep no ducks?" (I was compelled to confess my inexperience.) "Vy, then, I'll tell yer honour. Yer see this ere as grows on the top of the vater is duck-weed, and in course the ducks is fond on it; and them as keeps ducks is glad to git it, in course, at a low figure. So yer see, as I gits it for nuffin but my trouble, I can afford to sell it cheap."

"You don't pretend to say that people buy it?"

"Don't I though? Ketch me givvin on it away! I gits a penny a misure for every morsel on it; and voth the money, and no mistake."

"And where do you find customers?"

"Vy, that's the vurst on it too. 'Taint much of a nosegay

to carry about a feller; still I don't travel no great vays—hadn't need, you s'pose. Vell, then, sir, as you don't calkilate no hopposition, an' p'r'aps you'll stan' the price of a half-pint, I don't mind tellin' yer. My valk is Tuttle-street, the Hambury, and Strutton Ground, and Brewers Green, and Palmer's Willage, and York Street, vere there's lots o' courts and alleys, and ducks in course."

"Keep ducks there? Why, those are the filthiest neighbourhoods in Westminster."

"That's the werry reason, sir: there *is* so much mud, they vants the ducks to gobble it up. He—he!"

"But where do they find room for them? There are neither yards nor ponds."

"Oh, there's the street-door front by day, and they doos werry vell under the bed o' nights. But I'm werry dry a' talkin', yer honour; and I mustn't vaste no time, for yer see this ere sort o' green stuff vont keep not nohow, and must all be sold to-night."

"Dry! why, you are dripping wet from head to foot."

"Nothin' but vater, sir; and vater never vets Jakes, cos, d'ye see, I perfers beer."

"Is your name Jakes?"

"No, sir, my name's Villums—Ned Villums. But they calls me Jakes cos I scums the mud-pools and ditches. But them as call names pays their pennies; so I takes their tin and their compliments together, and never minds. Yer honour's a goin' to stan' summat, I know."

Having complied with the poor fellow's demand, and helped him, as I best could, to shoulder his nauseous burden, I saw him trudge off beneath it, at a good five-mile-an-hour pace, to the sale of his moist merchandise. As he vanished with his dripping load, I could not help mentally comparing the present contents of the wine-basket to those of a past day—the sparkling juice of the grape to the reeking weed—and the different destinies of those who revelled round the bottles, and

his who catered for the ducks. But the fellow was not to be pitied, and I felt that compassion would have been in his case injustice. He had health, humour, and spirits, which a wine-bibbing dyspeptic might have envied; and if his philosophy was not as elevated as that of Wordsworth's "leech-gatherer on the lonely moor," it was, to say the least of it, as practical.

GREEN FOOD FOR SINGING-BIRDS.

This is another article of perambulating merchandise peculiar to the great city, and one which meets with a regular and ready market, during the greater part of the year. Chickweed, groundsel, seed-grasses, and round green turfs, form the staple of the merchant's wares, with which he threads the streets and suburbs during the middle portion of the day; his cry being seldom heard before ten or eleven in the morning, and ceasing ere sundown, when his customers and consumers go to roost. One of these verdant professionals passes my window thrice a week during the summer months, and I have frequently encountered him in occasional strolls for the last ten years. Tall and erect, brawny and broad-shouldered, and bronzed with the suns of sixty summers, he looks more like a trooper of the Guards than a retailer of chickweed. But he evidently delights in his way of life, which leads him to the green fields ere the lark is yet aloft; and as he plods his dilatory way along the public thoroughfares, he sings his loud and sonorous song to a self-taught tune. "Groundsel and chickweed for the pretty little singing-bird" is the song; and the tune, commencing by a chant of four words on C, the first note, runs down the scale, like the simple chime of village bells, to the octave below, upon which he dwells with a force and gusto that is quite catching, ere he resumes his everlasting Da Capo.

One day, while choosing a turf from his basket, to gratify an impudent pet bird, I questioned my tall salesman as to his inducement for following such a mode of life. "Well, sir,"

said he, "I don't mind telling you, as you are a regular customer. The fact is, I couldn't do nothing else at the time I begun it, and wasn't fit neither for regular work. You must know, sir, I was bred a farm-labourer, and might have done well enough, for I was always fond of field-work, and cattle-tending, and such-like. But then, d'ye see, in eighteen-seven I listed — all along of a purty girl as didn't know her own mind — and main sad and sorry we both of us were when we found I couldn't be got off from serving. But that's neither here nor there. We parted, and in less than four years I went to Spain, where I had enough of sodgering. I've stood, sir, up to my breast in growing corn, and seen the ears on't cut off wi' bullets as clean as a whistle. But that's no matter. I got a bad wound at Vittoria, which was the hardest day's work I ever see in my life. So I was sent home wi' a hartificial brain-pan, and eighteen pence a day. I couldn' live very well upon that, you know, sir; so I comes up from Chatham (you know, sir, we're all sent to Chatham, up to Pitt's there, when we come from foreign parts), up to town here, to look about me. Well, sir, I couldn't get nothing as suited me, nor as didn't suit me either, for the matter o' that; and then my head did swim badly at times, though that's all right now, thank God! So, sir, I was a-standing one morning in one of them little streets by St. Paul's, when a gen'leman comes out of a countin'-house wi' green shutters and a pen in his ear, and he says to me — 'My good fellow,' says he, 'haven't you got nothing to do? I want a man,' says he, 'as got nothing to do.' 'No, sir,' says I, 'I han't; and I should be very much obleeged to you for a job.' 'Then,' says he, 'do you see that lark in the cage, and do you know what he wants?' 'I see him plain enough, sir,' says I; 'and it strikes me he wants to get out.' 'No he don't,' says he; 'he's not such a fool. He wants a fresh turf; and if you'll go and cut him one, I'll give you sixpence.' 'That's a bargain,' said I, and away I went;

but I found it a long way to the green grass, and that sixpence was arned harder than some. But I cut half-a-score turfs while I was about it, thinking there might be more birds than one with a country taste. Well, the gen'leman gave me a shilling when he knowed how far I had been, and I sold all the tothers for a penny a-piece. Arter that I took up with the weeds and grasses, and got a regular walk (one of my customers, as thinks himself very witty, calls it Birdcage Walk); and many's the bird in this here town as knows my song as well as his own. That was my beginnin', sir, and I've kept the game alive ever since; 'cept in winter-time, when I sells snow and ice to the 'fectioners, and brandy-balls, and sich-like, to warm the stomach on skating-days. And let me tell you, sir, I likes feeding the little birds, and being my own master, better than shooting and sticking my fellow-creeters at another man's bidding; and between you and me and the post it pays better."

With this the quondam grenadier departed, and in less than a minute I heard the well-known cry, "Groundsel and chickweed for the pretty little singing bird!"

THE MUSHROOM-HUNTER.

Pursuing an avocation which renders me occasionally liable to be abroad at all hours of the night, the opportunity is forced upon me of observing the various phases of London life which each succeeding hour reveals. Following the example of the Vicar of Wakefield, I never refuse the challenge of any man, whatever his apparent station, who proffers his conversation; and I have often found the gossip of wayfarers both interesting and profitable, while I am not aware that I ever lost anything by giving them a hearing. Business-belated one September night, or rather morning, for midnight had long ceased tolling from the thousand churches of the city, I was seeking for a short cut homewards, and stood for a moment hesitating at a

hitherto unexplored turning out of Gray's Inn Lane, when I was accosted by a man of strangely uncouth appearance, who inquired if I had lost my way. Upon stating that I merely wanted the shortest cut towards Holloway, he said he was going the whole distance, and beyond, and should be happy to show me the nearest road; adding, that he supposed I was desirous of getting to bed, "which I," said he, "have just left, to begin my day's work." "A strange hour," thought I, "to begin a day's work; not yet one o'clock." And as I walked behind him through the narrow and dirty lanes of that neighbourhood, I availed myself of the accommodation afforded by the gas-lamps to scrutinize his figure and costume. Of a slim and wiry make, and of the middle size, and about thirty-five years of age, I saw from his motions that he was active, agile, and a stranger to fatigue. His whole dress fitted his muscular frame almost as closely as that of Harlequin himself, but was composed of the vilest materials; half leather, half cloth, greasy, and rent, and patched and re-patched in a hundred places. A short pair of hobnailed Bluchers encased his feet; and a skull-cap of leather, guiltless of the smallest indication of a brim, covered his head, and fastened under his chin by a strap. At his back hung a long, shallow, wicker-basket, with a canvas covering: this was strapped round his waist. He was accompanied by a small, black, and ugly half-breed terrier—an old hand, evidently, for he lost no ground, but kept uniformly before his master, and if he outran him, never returned upon his track, but waited quietly till he came up.

"That is a prudent dog of yours," I said, as we emerged into a wider thoroughfare, and walked side by side.

"Ay, sir; he has learned prudence in the same school as his master. He was wild enough in his young days, like myself; and, like me, he has found out that if he would be of any use to-morrow, he must take care of himself to-day."

"You said you were just beginning your day's work; may I ask what is your occupation?"

"Occupation, properly speaking, I have none, sir—worse luck; I am one of a good many, driven from a thriving trade by modern machinery and improvements. You must know, sir, I was brought up to my father's trade, that of a calenderer; and a very decent property the old man left when he died. Four thousand pounds there was in the three per cents., which I, like a fool, prevailed upon my poor old mother to throw into the business, for the sake of extending it, thinking I could make five-and-twenty per cent. of it instead of three; and so I might too, but for new inventions, which threw me out of the market, and brought us in the end to ruin. I sometimes thank God the old lady didn't live to see the upshot of it all. We passed her grave, sir, two minutes ago, in the Spa Fields' burying-ground. Well, sir, when it was all over, I paid a good dividend; and the creditors, seeing how the matter was, gave me a couple of hundreds to begin again with. So, being always fond of books, and having a fancy for the trade, I thought I might do well enough—having only myself to look after—in a bookseller's shop; so I took a neat house in the New Road, and laid out all my money in books, and sat myself down behind the counter to wait for customers. Perhaps you would not think it, but there I sat from Monday morning till Saturday night without seeing a soul enter the shop except one child, who wanted change for a sixpence; and yet five or six thousand people passed the open door every day. The second week was not much better; few people came, and those who did come wanted the books for less than they cost, and assured me—which I afterwards found was true enough—that they could get them for less elsewhere. The business never came to anything, as you may suppose. In the course of six months I found out, what I ought to have known at first, that I didn't understand it; so I closed with a man who offered to take the stock at a valuation, and relieve me of the house. A rare valuation it was! All the volumes were lumped together, at sixpence a-piece;

and I saw the major part of them a week afterwards bundled into a great box at the door, and ticketed "Ninepence each." I received something less than a fourth of the original cost of the whole, and walked out, not particularly well satisfied, to try again.

"I was afraid to venture upon any other business, and therefore looked out for a situation of some sort. If I could have written a decent hand, I might perhaps have got a berth as under clerk; but nobody could ever read my writing; and though I threw away five or six pounds to an advertising teacher, who sports a colossal fist and goose-quill on his sign-board, all my endeavours to mend it were of no use. I need not trouble you with the fifty attempts I made to gain an honest livelihood, further than to say that they were all for a long time failures. My money went by degrees. As I grew older I grew poorer, and went down of course in the social scale. I have been warden in a jail, whence I was turned out because a highwayman, whom I had compelled to good behaviour, swore I was an old associate; I have been a pedlar and robbed of my pack on Durdham Down; I have been a billiard-marker, and kicked out by the proprietor because I would not score more games than the players had played; I have been cabman and hackney-coachman, till the omnibuses cut the cabs' throats; I have kept a fruit-stall on the pavement till it wouldn't keep me; I have hawked about the street every possible commodity you could mention; I have driven cattle to Smithfield, and thence to the slaughter-house; I have sold cats' meat and dogs' meat, and dealt in bones and rags; in short, I have done everything but beg, and have lived a whole week upon sixpence, because I would not do that."

"I hope things are not so bad with you just now?" said I, desirous of hearing the conclusion of his history.

"Not quite, sir: there is truth in the old proverb, 'He that is down can fall no lower.' At first I suffered a deal of mortification from the neglect of friends of prosperous days,

who were very liberal of their compassion and condolence, which are things I hate, but chary of everything else. I believe I conferred an obligation upon them all, when I resolved, as soon I did, never to trouble them again.

"One fine morning, after walking the streets all night for want of a bed, I found myself in Covent Garden market at sunrise, among a shoal of carts and waggons loaded with vegetables for the day's sale. The thought struck me at once that here I might pick up a job: I commenced the look-out in good earnest, and wasn't long of getting employment. I received threepence for pitching a couple of tons of cabbages out of a waggon, and scoring them off; but then I was only a deputy, and was paid under price. This, however, procured me a breakfast, and gave me heart to try again. I picked up three shillings altogether in the course of the day, two of which I paid in advance for a regular lodging for the following week—a luxury I had not then enjoyed for some months. The next day was not a market-day, and I did not manage so well; but I stuck by the market, and learned many modes of earning a penny. I bought vegetables at a low price, or got them in return for my labour; these I sold again, and managed to earn something, at all events, every day. Once, on taking potatoes to a baker who purchased all I could get, I was asked for mushrooms, for which the old chap had a mighty relish. I promised to get him some, but found them too dear in the market to allow any margin for me; so recollecting that I had seen a vast number the year before in a certain part of the Barnet road, during my experience as assistant drover, I set off on an exploring expedition. Having arrived at the spot, after a pretty close search, I succeeded in gathering a tidy crop, though not without a good deal of labour and inconvenience. I found that the sale of these paid me well for my trouble. I often make between three and four shillings by a trip, and sometimes more. But I soon found out that others reaped that ground as well as myself; and to keep it pretty

well in my own hands, I find it necessary to be on the spot before the sun is up. By this means I get more; and, what is of greater importance, they are of better quality."

"And pray, does your dog perform any part in the business, or is he merely a companion?"

"Why, sir, I daresay dogs might be taught to hunt mushrooms as well as truffles; but there is no occasion for that, as mushrooms grow above ground, and can't well be missed. But my dog's part is to mind the basket, and he does the business well. You see I leave the harvest to his care, while I scramble through hedges and over ditches and fences in search of more. I saw you quizzing my surtout; 'tis n't much to look at, but it serves my purpose better than a coat with two tails. I can ram my head, in this thick shoe-leather cap, through a quickset-hedge, where a fox would hardly follow me; and when I have got this small bag full (producing a canvas bag from his pocket), I return and deposit them in the basket till the work is done. I am back again in the market by the time the housekeepers are abroad purchasing provisions for the day. My stock never hangs long on hand; and it is very seldom that I am reduced to the necessity of lowering my price, or consuming them myself."

"This is a laborious calling," I said, "and one that cannot be very remunerative, or allow you to make much provision for the future."

"Not much, sir, it is true; but yet I do make some. I save a shilling every week at least, and sometimes, in a lucky season, as much as five; that goes into the savings'-bank, and would suffice to keep me out of the hospital in case of illness, which I don't much fear, being a teetotaller and pretty well weather-proof. I think it was Dr. Johnson, but I won't be certain, who said, 'No man ever begins to save unless he has a prospect of accumulation.' I don't think that is altogether true; at any rate, if it is, I am the exception that proves the rule. I began to save, strange as it may sound, because I did

not know what to do with my money. Having learned by necessity to live upon the smallest possible amount, I was afraid, when my gains exceeded that, of again acquiring luxurious habits, which it had cost me so much to get rid of; for that reason I put the first five shillings into the bank, and have added to it weekly, with very few omissions, ever since. I will not deny that, with the gradual increase of my little hoard, a new prospect has opened for me, and that I only wait for the possession of a certain amount to begin business in the market upon a more respectable footing, which will allow me to dispense with my midnight labours."

Here he ceased; and soon after, arriving at the corner of the street in which was my own house, I bade him good morning; and wishing a speedy and prosperous result to his economic endeavours, parted with the mushroom-hunter.

THE GARRET MASTER.

This is not a title assumed by any particular class, but rather a soubriquet bestowed upon one who cannot correctly be said to belong to any. He is operative and manufacturer, merchant and labourer, combined in one person; and has dealings both wholesale and retail, after a fashion of his own. No man can rightly accuse him of sapping our commercial system by an undue extension of credit, seeing that it is very rarely that he trusts anybody, and still more rarely is anybody found who will trust him. He works at an easy trade, and manufactures articles of every sort or description that may be wanted, which he has wit or ingenuity enough to turn out of hand. Two things are essential to a man's becoming a garret master: in the first place, he must be able to practise some occupation which requires but little capital to set him up in business; and, in the second place, he must be unwilling, either from a spirit of insubordination, a love of idleness, or a feeling of independence, or else incapable, from want of average skill in

his calling, to work as a journeyman. Whatever be his motive, it can hardly be the love of gain, since his profits, so far at least as one can judge from his personal appearance and domestic surroundings, must fall far short of those of an average workman. There may be some few exceptions to whom this general character is not applicable; indeed I know there are; but the more respectable of the number would, I have reason to think, subscribe to the truth of this delineation of the general body—if body they can be called—who live in perfect isolation, and never come together.

Every one who walks the streets of London, if he ever exercise his observation at all, must have remarked, amongst the infinite variety of wares disposed for sale inside and outside of the endless array of shops that line the public thoroughfares, a prodigious number of articles which are not, properly speaking, the production of any particular or known species of handicraft; or if some of them be such ostensibly, it becomes apparent upon inspection, and upon a comparison of prices, that they are not the manufactures of well-practised hands, but are hastily and fraudulently got up, to delude the eyes of the unwary by the semblance of workmanship. Picture-frames, looking more like gilt gingerbread than carved gold, which they should resemble; small cabinets of cedar-wood, and miniature chests of drawers, which seem to stand midway between a toy and a domestic implement; easy (to break) chairs, which a man of fifteen stone would crush to pieces; mirrors of all sizes, each one affording a new version of your astonished face; slippers and clogs of every possible material; boys' caps at half-a-crown a dozen, of every variety of shape and colour, manufactured from the tailors' clippings; whetstones of every geological formation—*trap* (for customers) predominating; cribbage boards, draught boards, dominoes, and chess-men, at any price you like; work-boxes, writing-desks, and music-stands, glued together from the refuse of a cabinet-maker's workshop; carpenters' tools incapable of an

edge, among which figures a centre-bit, with twenty pieces, for five shillings—a bait for amateur mechanics which has astonishing success; towel-horses, that will fall to pieces if not tenderly handled; and flights of steps, leading to a broken head, or something worse—all demand attention by their plausible appearance and astonishingly low price. But these are not all. The heedless bargain-hunter may fool away a good round sum as easily as the veriest trifle. Gaudy pianofortes, magnificent-looking instruments, labelled "Broadwood" or "Collard," may be had at "an immense sacrifice" (this is true in the buyer's case), which ought to be warranted not to stand in tune for twenty-four hours, and to become veritable tin-kettles in a twelvemonth. Horrible fiddles, by the thousand, constructed only to sell and to set the teeth on edge, lie in wait for the musical tyro; seraphines that growl like angry demons, until they become asthmatic, when they wheeze away their hateful lives in a month or two, are to be found in every broker's shop, together with every other musical instrument you could name; all uniting to prove that if the best articles are to be procured in London, so are the worst, and that too in abundance.

Nor does the evil stop here. "The world is still deceived with ornament," and the imitators of things real know it well, and make a good market by the knowledge. Woe to the scientific student who, anxious to economise his funds, buys his necessary instruments of any other than a well-known and established maker! In no department of manufacture is there a more profitable field for humbug and plunder than in this. All descriptions of scientific instruments, surgical, optic, chemical, engineering, and others, abound in every quarter—the pawnbroker being the chief medium or middleman through whom they find their way to the luckless experimentalist. Telescopes with conveniently soiled lenses; camera-lucidas, by means of which Argus himself could see nothing; scalpels, lancets, and amputating knives, never intended to cut; sur-

gical saws with tender teeth; air-pumps in want of sucker; pentagraphs, with rickety joints and false admeasurements; unseasoned glass retorts; crucibles sure to split on the fire; opera-glasses with twopenny lenses in tubes of specious magnificence; and a thousand other things, which are manufactured weekly in large quantities, but never for any other purpose than to pawn or to sell, are to be met with in every street, and proclaim the industry of a class of operatives whose labours are anything but a benefit to the general community.

It is not my intention to lay all these enormities upon the shoulders of the garret master; indeed many of the manufacturers of the vile wares above mentioned are men of considerable capital, those especially who fabricate and deal in the more expensive articles. But yet justice to the subject of this sketch compels me to declare that the guilty parties are mainly members of his class; though individuals are not wanting among them, the history of whose lives would present the praiseworthy struggle of industry and integrity against adverse circumstances. If the reader will accompany me to the narrow theatre of his operations, he may behold the garret master in the midst of his avocations, and then form as lenient a judgment as the somewhat singular spectacle will admit.

On a summer evening in the year 184—, having been requested by a country correspondent to make inquiries respecting the execution of a commission entrusted to one of this tribe, I set out in the direction indicated in his letter, and arrived at the door of the house in which the garret master dwelt, about half an hour before sunset. The place was a back street running nearly parallel with Holborn, in the neighbourhood of one of the inns of court, and one that, judging from the height and structure of the house, had once laid claim to a character for respectability, not to say gentility: but all such pretensions had evidently long been given up; and the lofty dwelling, fashioned originally for the abodes of

easy and comfortable independence, now stood in begrimed and dingy neglect, the uncared-for tenements of the artisan and the labourer. The door of the house I entered stood fastened open; and the loose boards of the bare passage, wanting scraper, mat, and oil-cloth, bent and clattered under my feet. The walls, from the door to the summit of the topmost stair, were of a dark-brown colour, rising from the accumulated soiling of half a century, and polished by the friction of passers up and down, except where some few tatters of the original papering yet hung about them, or where the plaster had been knocked away, through the careless porterage of heavy articles. The balusters as far as the first floor were in tolerable repair, though some of the rails showed by their want of paint that they were substitutes for others which had left the rank. Higher up, they were half deficient; and near the top story had been removed altogether, probably for fuel, by some starving inmate, and replaced by a fence of rough slab deal. Of this I was rather sensible by touch than by sight; for the skylight that should have illuminated the staircase was covered over, with the exception of one small cranny, plainly to exclude the weather, which would else have found entrance through the broken panes. I should be sorry to afford the reader too accurate a notion of the villanous odour that infected the atmosphere of the house; it would have perplexed even Coleridge—who said that in Cologne he "counted two-and-seventy stenches"—to have described it. It seemed a compound of spirits, beer, and stale tobacco, of rancid oil or varnish, with a flavour of a dog a month dead. I should mention that I knocked at one of five doors on the third floor, when three of them suddenly opened, but not the one to which I had applied my knuckles. Three dirty-faced matrons in dishabille, two of them having infants at their breast, made their simultaneous appearance, and inquired what I wanted; one of them informing me that "the doctor" was not within, but would be found at the —— tap. Mentally wondering

who "the doctor" thus domiciled could be, I stated that I had business with Mr. T——, and requested to be shown his door. "It is the fifth door on the floor above," said the woman who had mentioned "the doctor," withdrawing as she spoke. Arriving at the door in question, I could hear a murmur of voices, and the whirling of a wheel in rapid motion. The door was opened immediately at my summons, and the rays of a lurid sunset streamed in upon the landing-place. The woman who answered the door seemed astonished at my unlooked-for appearance, and plainly expected a different party. As she drew back to make room for my entrance, a scene met my view, too common, I fear, in the industrial resorts of our great cities, but one calling aloud for amendment and redress in every possible particular. In a room, the dimensions of which might be about sixteen feet by eleven or twelve, were living an entire family, consisting of certainly not fewer than eight persons. Near a stove, placed about a yard from the fireplace, the funnel going into the chimney through a hole in the wall above the mantelpiece, sat the garret master, Mr. T——, in the act of filling his pipe. Beyond a shirt, dirty and ragged, canvas trousers, and a pair of old slippers, cut down from older boots, he had nothing on his person, if we except a beard of a month's growth. A lad of seventeen or eighteen, similarly non-dressed, whose unwashed flesh peeped through a dozen rents in his garments, was busy at an old rickety lathe turning pill-boxes, some gross of which were scattered on the board in front of him; as he turned for a moment at my entrance, he showed a face haggard and wan, the index of bad diet and early intemperance. Seated at a carpenter's bench, which, together with the lathe, occupied the whole portion of the room next the window, was a girl of nineteen or twenty, engaged in carefully spreading gold leaf upon the word "CUPPING," previously written with varnish upon a strip of glass. Her costume, surmounted with a tattered man's jacket, would have disgraced the "black doll"

usually suspended over a rag-shop; the same indication of semi-starvation and (alas that it must be said !) of intemperance was legible in a countenance that ought to have been, and indeed was once, interesting. At the end of the bench, in the corner of the room, a boy of twelve or thirteen years was occupied in French-polishing a few small and showy frames adapted for the reception of the glass labels. At the other corner, to the left of the lathe, was a still younger child—I can hardly say of which sex—busily fitting the covers to the pill-boxes, and laying them in dozens for package; while an infant of scarce three years was asleep in the shavings under the bench, where, it was evident from the presence of the brown and grimy blanket-rags, he would be joined at night by other members of the family. There was no bedstead in the room; but what was presumably the bed of the parents—a heap of filthy bundling—lay on the floor between the door and the corner of the apartment. While I was making inquiries concerning the commission of my country friend, the mother stepped between me and the father, to whom I had addressed myself, and intimated by a look of shame, alarm, and entreaty, that she was the more fit party to be questioned. The man, however, told her, with an oath, to stand aside; to which command she paid no attention, but proceeded to inform me they were on the point of completing my friend's order, and that the goods should be forwarded to my address, if I would leave it, early on the following morning. While she was speaking, I heard a light foot on the stairs; and the door opening, a little girl of about six, almost decently clad in comparison with the others, entered the room, clasping a black bottle carefully in both hands. The mother, apparently unwilling that a stranger should be aware of the nature of the burden brought by the child, was about concealing it in a cupboard; but the father, who, I now for the first time perceived, was on the high road to intoxication, swore at her angrily for pretending to be ashamed of what he proclaimed she liked as well as any-

body, and loudly demanded the gin-bottle. With a sigh and a look of shame she complied with his desire, when he immediately applied himself to the contents with an air of dogged satisfaction. The child who had brought in the gin was the only one of the family that had the slightest appearance of health in the countenance; and she, it was easy to see, owed it to her fortunate position as general messenger to the whole, and to the exercise and free air this function procured her. All the rest were in a sort of etiolated condition—pale and wan from confinement, bad air, and worse food. The dress of the whole family, with the exception of that of the little messenger, who was kept in some show of decency for the sake of appearances, would not have sold for a penny above the rag price in Monmouth Street Neither mother, nor daughter grown up to womanhood, seemed to have preserved a relic of that graceful sentiment of personal propriety, which is the last thing that the sex generally surrenders to the "want which cometh like an armed man." But here want was not the destroyer: a fiend of more hideous aspect and deadlier purpose held undisputed sway in this wretched abode of perverted industry and precocious intemperance. As I departed down the crazy stairs, I could not help compassionating the hapless mother, whom I thought it more than probable the hateful vice of intoxication had first oppressed, and then seduced. Her bloated countenance left no room for doubt as to the truth of her tyrant's assertion; but there remained on it yet the trace of former truthfulness and kindliness, and the burning sense of shame attendant upon her present condition. On the coming doom of the family—the son, the daughter, the toiling children, the sleeping infant—it was too painful to reflect.

THE LABEL PRINTER.

The next day, my friend's commission requiring it, I paid a visit to one of the same class in a different line of business. In

one of the small courts leading out of Drury Lane I found this worthy, whose occupation was that of printing labels in gold letters upon coloured paper. Fortunately for the fair sex he was a bachelor, and being on the verge of fifty, was likely to continue so. All the implements of his art, and they were not few, together with his bed and his beehive-chair, were around him in a room a dozen feet square, and which he gaily styled the "parlour next to the sky." His press was a contrivance such as I had never seen before, economizing both space and labour, at the penalty—which he seemed to care little about—of abominably bad work: the pressure was produced by the action of a pedal near the floor under the machine, and consequently the labour of rolling in and rolling out, indispensable in the common printing-press, was avoided.

When I entered, he was actually printing the word "Lodgins" upon half-a-dozen strips of polished azure paper, applying powdered gold, with a pencil of camel-hair, to the varnish or size used instead of ink, as each was impressed! Upon my pointing out the liberty he had taken with the orthography of the word, he seemed not to comprehend my meaning; and remarking that he never did nor could understand any of the hographies, seriously inquired what was wrong. Being at length made aware that another g was wanting (but not before he had made careful reference to a dog's-eared dictionary), he assumed a look of strange mortification and perplexity. It was not altogether that he was ashamed of his ignorance; of that the poor fellow had been too long conscious; it was rather that he could see no remedy in the present case. "This, sir," said he, "is a *noosance*, and no mistake; that's my biggest fount, and there is but one alphabet of it beyond the vowels!" After a minute's consideration, however, and scratching of his grizzled pate, he brightened up, and went on with the affair as it was, with the consolatory declaration that they were no great scholars thereabout; that

there were others no wiser than himself; and that the things were for people in the court, who would never find it out; to which he added, that "if anybody had a right to spell a word as he chose, it was a printer short of types." Somewhat tickled with the fellow's good-temper and accommodating philosophy, I sat down to wait for my friend's packet of labels, which he said only required taking out of the finishing-press to be ready for delivery. I learned from his conversation that he had served his time to a little bookseller and printer at a small town on the Welsh coast; but he had spent most of the seven years in running about the town as circulating librarian, or waiting in the shop, and not as many months altogether in the office, where there was generally nothing to be done. Discharged of course at the end of his term, to make room for a new apprentice with a new premium, he had come to seek his fortune in London. After considerable difficulty and disappointment, he at length succeeded in obtaining an engagement in a large office. On taking possession of his "frame," he said, at first he was so alarmed at the exploits of the numbers of clever and rapid workmen around him, that he had not the proper use of the few faculties he could boast, and could think of nothing but his own want of skill. This state of mind only made the matter worse. Nervous and excited, he endeavoured to make the same show of celerity as the others, and got through the first day in a state of complete bewilderment. The second and third passed off a little more to his satisfaction; and he was beginning to nourish some small degree of hope, when on the fourth day the first evidence of the value of his labour was put into his hands, in the form of a proof copy of his work, sent from one of the readers, whose office it is to mark the mistakes of the compositor, for the purpose of correction. Such a horrid amount of blunders he declared the world had never seen before at one view: to the sheet upon which the

broad page was printed, the corrector had been compelled to join another, to afford space to mark the errors. "Upon my soul, sir," said he, "I could not stand the sight of it; moreover, the man behind me was grinning over his frame, and telegraphing the whole room. I wished myself a thousand miles away; and seizing my hat and coat, bolted down the stairs as fast as I could run. I got a letter in a few days from the party who recommended me, desiring me to return and resume my work; but I could not do it. The face of that chap grinning over my shoulder has given me the nightmare fifty times. That's six-and-twenty years ago, and I have never been near the place since." Sick of the printing, he had next tried to work as a bookbinder, which, as is usual in country towns, he had learned as well (or rather as ill) as the other; but here also he found himself equally at fault. Discharged from the bookbinder's to make room for a more expert hand, he found himself cast upon the world, with no available means of subsistence. Want of funds, speedily followed by want of food, drove him again to make application to the printing-offices; but now he avoided large houses, and was at length fortunate enough to locate himself in a suburban establishment of small pretensions, where he got board and lodging, and a nominal salary, doing what he could, for just what the proprietor, who was as poor almost a himself, could afford to give him. Here he stayed, on and off, as he said, for more than a dozen years, during which he contrived to add something to his knowledge of the business, and to save a few pounds, with which, on the demise of his employer, he purchased a part of the materials he had so long handled, and commenced printer in his own right. It appeared that the whole of his gains during all the years of his mastership had not averaged much above forty pounds a year, out of which he had to pay 3s. 6d. a week for the rent of his room. He showed me his stock of implements, consisting

principally of solid brass blocks, engraved in relief for the purpose of printing gold labels attachable to the thousand-and-one wares of druggists, chemists, haberdashers, fancy stationers, and numberless other traders. The blocks were for the most part the property of his employers; and he found it his interest to keep a small stock of each on hand, to meet the demands of the proprietors. He attributed the blotchy impression which characterized all his work, mainly, to his rickety press, and sighed for a better, which he had yet no prospect of obtaining; but he observed that though his work would look very bad in ink, it was a very different thing in gold, that made even a blotch ornamental, and of which people seldom complained of having too much for their money.

This poor fellow presented the most remarkable instance of unfitness for the business he followed that I ever met with. With huge, horny, unmanageable fingers, and defective vision, he pursued a craft, to the successful prosecution of which quick, keen sight, and manual dexterity are indispensable. Requiring a knowledge of at least so much grammar as is comprised in the arts of orthography and punctuation, he was profoundly ignorant of both. Thirty years of practice as a printer had not taught him to spell the commonest words in the language, as I became aware from certain cacographic despatches on business matters subsequently received from him. Honestest of bunglers! one-half of his painstaking existence was passed in repairing the blunders of the other; and yet it is a question whether he did not enjoy his being with as much relish as any man that ever lived. His cheerfulness was without a parallel in my experience: an inexhaustible spring of hilarity seemed welling from every feature. Nature had more than compensated him, by the bestowal of such a temperament, for all the sports of fortune. Proof against calamity, he grinned instinctively in the face of adverse circumstances; and once declared to me that he did not think

any mortal thing could depress his animal spirits, unless it might be a drunken wife; whether such an appendage to his fortunes might succeed in doing so he couldn't say, but he had no intention of making the experiment.

He died the death one might almost have wished him, considering his solitary lot. He was found by an early visitor one morning dead in his beehive chair, the newspaper in his hand, a half-smoked pipe broken at his feet, a pint of hardly-tasted ale on the hob of the empty grate, and the candle burnt out in the socket on the little table at his side.

LONDON CROSSING-SWEEPERS.

THERE is no occupation in life, be it ever so humble, which is justly worthy of contempt, if by it a man is enabled to administer to his necessities without becoming a burden to others, or a plague to them, by the parade of shoeless feet, fluttering rags, and a famished face. In the multitudinous drama of life, which on the wide theatre of the metropolis is ever enacting with so much intense earnestness, there is, and from the very nature of things there always must be, a numerous class of supernumeraries, who from time to time, by the force of varying circumstances, are pushed and hustled off the stage, and shuffled into the side-scenes, the drear and dusky background of the world's proscenium. Of the thousands and tens of thousands thus rudely dealt with, he is surely not the worst, who, wanting a better weapon, shoulders a birch-broom, and goes forth to make his own way in the world, by removing the moist impediments of filth and refuse from the way of his more fortunate fellows. Indeed, look upon him in what light you may, he is in some sort a practical moralist. Though far remote from the ivy chaplet on Wisdom's glorious brow, yet his stump of withered birch inculcates a lesson of virtue, by reminding us, that we should take heed to our steps in our journeyings through the wilderness of life; and, so far as in him lies, he helps us to do so, and by the exercise of a very catholic faith, looks for his reward to the value he supposes us to entertain for that virtue which, from time immemorial, has been in popular parlance classed as next to godliness.

Time was, it is said, when the profession of a street-sweeper in London was a certain road to competence and fortune—when the men of the broom were men of capital; when they lived well, and died rich, and left legacies behind them to their regular patrons. These palmy days, at any rate, are past now. Let no man, or woman either, expect a legacy at this time of day from the receiver of his copper dole. The labour of the modern sweeper is nothing compared with his of half a century ago. The channel of viscous mud, a foot deep, through which, so late as the time when George the Third was king, the carts and carriages had literally to plough their way, no longer exists, and the labour of the sweeper is reduced to a tithe of what it was. He has no longer to dig a trench in the morning, and wall up the sides of his fosse with stiff earth, hoarded for the purpose, as we have seen him doing in the days when "Boney" was a terror. The city scavengers have reduced his work to a minimum, and his pay has dwindled proportionately. The twopences which used to be thrown to a sweeper will now pay for a ride, and the smallest coin is considered a sufficient guerdon for a service so light. But what he has lost in substantial emolument, he has gained in *morale;* he is infinitely more polite and attentive than he was; he sweeps ten times as clean for a half-penny as he did for twopence or sixpence, and thanks you more heartily than was his wont in the days of yore. The truth is, that civility, as a speculation, is found to pay; and the want of it, even among the very lowest rank of industrials in London, is at the present moment not merely a rarity, but an actual phenomenon—always supposing that something is to be got by it.

The increase of vehicles of all descriptions, but more especially omnibuses, which are perpetually rushing along the main thoroughfares, has operated largely in shutting out the crossing-sweepers from what was at one period the principal theatre of their industry. Independent, too, of the unbroken stream of carriages which renders sweeping during the day

impossible, and the collection of small coin from the crowd who dart impatiently across the road when a practicable breach presents itself, equally so, it is found that too dense a population is less favourable to the brotherhood of the broom than one ever so sparse and thin. Had the negro of Waithman's obelisk survived the advent of Shillibeer, he would have had to shift his quarters, or to have drawn upon his three-and-a-half per cents. to maintain his position. The sweepers who work on the great lines of traffic from Oxford Street west to Aldgate, are consequently not nearly so numerous as they once were, though the members of the profession have probably doubled their numbers within the last twenty years. They exercise considerable judgment in the choice of their locations, making frequent experiments in different spots, feeling the pulse of the neighbourhood, as it were, ere they finally settle down to establish a permanent connection.

We shall come to a better understanding of the true condition of these muddy nomads by considering them in various classes, as they actually exist, and each of which may be identified without much trouble. The first in the rank is he who is bred to the business, who has followed it from his earliest infancy, and never dreamed of pursuing any other calling. We must designate him as

No. 1. *The Professional Sweeper.*—He claims precedence before all others, as being to the manner born, and inheriting his broom, with all its concomitant advantages, from his father, or mother, as it might be. All his ideas, interests, and affections are centered in one spot of ground—the spot he sweeps, and has swept daily for the last twenty or thirty years, ever since it was bequeathed to him by his parent. The companion of his childhood, his youth, and his maturer age, is the post buttressed by the curb-stone at the corner of the street. To that post, indeed, he is a sort of younger brother. It has been his friend and support through many a stormy day and blustering night. It is the confidant of his hopes

and his sorrows, and sometimes, too, his agent and cashier, for he has cut a small basin in the top of it, where a passing patron may deposit a coin if he choose, under the guardianship of the broom, which, while he is absent for a short half-hour discussing a red herring and a crust for his dinner, leans gracefully against his friend the post, and draws the attention of a generous public to that as the deputy-receiver of the exchequer. Our professional friend has a profound knowledge of character: he has studied the human face divine all his life, and can read at a glance, through the most rigid and rugged lineaments, the indications of benevolence or the want of it; and he knows what aspect and expression to assume, in order to arouse the sympathies of a hesitating giver. He knows every inmate of every house in his immediate neighbourhood; and not only that, but he knows their private history and antecedents for the last twenty years. He has watched a whole generation growing up under his broom, and he looks upon them all as so much material destined to enhance the value of his estate. He is the humble pensioner of a dozen families: he wears the shoes of one, the stockings of another, the shirts of a third, the coats of a fourth, and so on; and he knows the taste of everybody's cookery, and the temper of everybody's cookmaid, quite as well as those who daily devour the one and scold the other. He is intimate with everybody's cat and everybody's dog, and will carry them home if he finds them straying. He is on speaking terms with everybody's servant-maid, and does them all a thousand kind offices, which are repaid with interest by surreptitious scraps from the larder, and jorums of hot tea in the cold wintry afternoons. On the other hand, if he knows so much, he is equally well known: he is as familiar to sight as the Monument on Fish Street Hill to those who live opposite; he is part and parcel of the street view, and must make a part of the picture whenever it is painted, or else it wont be like. You cannot realize the idea of meeting him elsewhere; it

"would be shocking to your nerves to think of it; you would as soon think of seeing the Obelisk walking up Ludgate Hill, for instance, as of meeting him there—it could not be. Where he goes, when he leaves his station, you have not the least notion. He is there so soon as it is light in the morning, and till long after the gas is burning at night. He is a married man, of course, and his wife, a worthy helpmate, has no objection to pull in the same boat with him. When Goggs has a carpet to beat—he beats all the carpets on his estate—Mrs. Goggs comes to console the post in his absence. She usually signalizes her advent by a desperate assault with the broom upon the whole length of the crossing: it is plain she never thinks that Goggs keeps the place clean enough, and so she brushes him a hint. Goggs has a weakness for beer, and more than once we have seen him asleep on a hot thirsty afternoon, too palpably under the influence of John Barleycorn to admit of a doubt, his broom between his legs, and his back against his abstinent friend the post. Somehow, whenever this happens, Mrs G. is sure to hear of it, and she walks him off quietly, that the spectacle of a sweeper overtaken may not bring a disgrace upon the profession; and then, brodm in hand, she takes her stand, and does his duty for the remainder of the day. The receipts of the professional sweeper do not vary throughout the year so much as might be supposed. They depend very little on chance contributions: these, there is no doubt, fall off considerably, if they do not fail altogether, during a continuance of dry weather, when there is no need of the sweeper's services; but the man is remunerated chiefly by regular donations from known patrons, who form his connection, and who, knowing that he must eat and drink be the weather wet or dry, bestow their periodical pittances accordingly.

No. 2. is the *Morning Sweeper.*—This is rather a knowing subject, one, at least, who is capable of drawing an inference from certain facts. There are numerous lines of route, both

north and south of the great centres of commerce, and all converging towards the city as their nucleus, which are traversed, morning and evening, for two or three consecutive hours, by bands of gentlemanly-looking individuals: clerks, book-keepers, foremen, business-managers, and such like responsible functionaries, whose unimpeachable outer integuments testify to their regard for appearances. This current of respectability sets in towards the city at about half-past six in the morning, and continues its flow until just upon ten o'clock, when it may be said to be high-water. Though a large proportion of these agents of the world's traffic are daily borne to and from their destination in omnibuses, still the great majority, either for the sake of exercise or economy, are foot-passengers. For the accommodation of the latter, the crossing-sweeper stations himself upon the dirtiest portion of the route, and clearing a broad and convenient path ere the sun is out of bed, awaits the inevitable tide, which must flow, and which can hardly fail of bringing him some remuneration for his labour. If we are to judge from the fact, that along one line of route which we have been in the habit of traversing for several years, we have counted as many as fourteen of these morning sweepers in a march of little more than two miles, the speculation cannot be altogether unprofitable. In traversing the same route in the middle of the day, not three of the sweepers would be found at their post; and the reason would be obvious enough, since the streets are then comparatively deserted, being populous in the morning only, because they are so many short-cuts or direct thoroughfares from the suburbs to the city. The morning sweeper is generally a lively and active young fellow; often a mere child, who is versed in the ways of London life, and who, knowing well the value of money, from the frequent want of it, is anxious to earn a penny by any honest means. Ten to one, he has been brought up in the country, and has been tutored by hard necessity, in this great wilderness of brick, to make the most of every hour, and of

every chance it may afford him. He will be found in the middle of the day touting for a job at the railway stations, to carry a portmanteau or to wheel a truck; or he will be at Smithfield, helping a butcher to drive to the slaughter-house his bargain of sheep or cattle; or in some livery-yard, currying a horse or cleaning out a stable. If he can find nothing better to employ him, he will return to his sweeping in the evening, especially if it be summer-time, and should set in wet at five or six o'clock. When it is dark early, he knows that it won't pay to resume the broom; commercial gentlemen are not particular about the condition of their Wellingtons when nobody can see to criticise their polish, and all they want is to exchange them for slippers as soon as possible. If we were to follow the career of this industrious fellow up to manhood, we should in all probability find him occupying worthily a hard-working but decent and comfortable position in society.

No 3 is the *Occasional Sweeper*.—Now and then, in walking the interminable streets, one comes suddenly upon very questionable shapes, which, however, we don't question, but walk on and account for them mythically if we can. Among these singular apparitions which at times have startled us, not a few have borne a broom in their hands, and appealed to us for a reward for services which, to say the best of them, were extremely doubtful. Now an elderly gentleman in silver spectacles, with pumps on his feet, and a roquelaure with a fur-collar over his shoulders, and an expression of unutterable anguish in his countenance, holds out his hand and bows his head as we pass, and groans audibly the very instant we are within earshot of a groan; which is a distance of about ten inches in a London atmosphere. Now an old, old man, tall, meagre, and decrepit, with haggard eye and moonstruck visage, bares his aged head to the pattering rain—

> "Loose his beard and hoary hair
> Stream like a meteor to the troubled air."

He makes feeble and fitful efforts to sweep a pathway across the road, and the dashing cab pulls up suddenly just in time to save him from being hurled to the ground by the horse. Then he gives it up as a vain attempt, and leans, the model of despair, against the wall, and wrings his skeleton fingers in agony—when just as a compassionate matron is drawing the strings of her purse, stopping for her charitable purpose in a storm of wind and rain, the voice of the policeman is heard over her shoulder: "What, you are here at it again, old chap? Well, I'm blowed if I think anything 'll cure you. You'd better put up your pus, marm: if he takes your money, I shall take him to the station-us, that's all. Now, old chap—trot, trot, trot!" And away walks the old impostor, with a show of activity perfectly marvellous for his years, the policeman following close at his heels till he vanishes in the arched entry of a court.

The next specimen is perhaps "a swell," out at elbows, a seedy and somewhat ragged remnant of a very questionable kind of gentility—a gentility engendered in "coal-holes," and "cider-cellars," in "shades," and such midnight "kens"—suckled with brandy-and-water and port-wine negus, and fed with deviled kidneys and toasted cheese. He has run to the end of his tether, is cleaned out even to the last disposable shred of his once well-stocked wardrobe; and after fifty high-flying and desperate resolves, and twice fifty mean and sneaking devices to victimize those who have the misfortune to be assailable by him, "to this complexion he has come at last." He has made a track across the road, rather a slovenly disturbance of the mud than a clearance of it; and having finished his performance in a style to indicate that he is a stranger to the business, being born to better things, he rears himself with front erect and arms a-kimbo, with one foot advanced after the most statuesque model, and exhibits a face of scornful brass to an unsympathizing world, before whom he stands a monument of neglected merit, and whom he doubtless expects to over-

whelm with unutterable shame for their abominable treatment of a man and a brother—and a gentleman to boot. This sort of exhibition never lasts long, it being a kind of standing-dish for which the public have very little relish in this practical age. The "swell" sweeper generally subsides in a week or two, and vanishes from the stage, on which, however ornamental, he is of very little use.

The occasional sweeper is much oftener a poor countryman, who has wandered to London in search of employment, and, finding nothing else, has spent his last fourpence in the purchase of a besom, with which he hopes to earn a crust. Here his want of experience in town is very much against him. You may know him instantly from the *habitué* of the streets; he plants himself in the very thick and throng of the most crowded thoroughfare—the rapids, so to speak, of the human current—where he is of no earthly use, but, on the contrary, very much in the way, and where, while everybody wishes him at Jericho, he wonders that nobody gives him a copper; or he undertakes impossible things, such as the sweeping of the whole width of Charing Cross from east to west, between the equestrian statue and Nelson's Pillar, where, if he sweep the whole, he can't collect, and if he collect, he can't sweep, and he breaks his heart and his back too in a fruitless vocation. He picks up experience in time; but he is pretty sure to find a better trade before he has learned to cultivate that of a crossing-sweeper to perfection.—Many of these occasional hands are Hindoos, Lascars, or Orientals of some sort, whose dark skins, contrasted with their white and scarlet drapery, render them conspicuous objects in a crowd; and from this cause they probably derive an extra profit, as they can scarcely be passed by without notice. The sudden promotion of one of this class, who was hailed by the Nepaulese ambassador, as he stood, broom in hand, in St. Paul's Churchyard, and engaged as dragoman to the embassy, will be in the recollection of the reader. It would be impossible to embrace in our category

even a tithe of the various characters who figure in London as occasional sweepers. A broom is the last resort of neglected and unemployed industry, as well as of sudden and unfriended ill-fortune—the sanctuary to which a thousand victims fly from the fiends of want and starvation. The broken-down tradesman, the artisan out of work, the decayed gentleman, the ruined gambler, the starving scholar,—each and all we have indubitably seen brooming the muddy ways for the chance of a halfpenny or a penny. It is not very long since we were addressed in Water-street, Blackfriars, by a middle-aged man in a garb of seedy black, who handled his broom like one who played upon a strange instrument, and who, wearing the words *Pauper et pedester* written on a card stuck in his hat-band, told us, in good colloquial Latin, a tale of such horrifying misery and destitution, that we shrink from recording it here. We must pass on to the next on our list, who is—

No. 4, the *Lucus-a-non*, or a sweeper who never sweeps.—This fellow is a vagabond of the first-water, or of the first-mud rather. His stock in trade is an old worn-out broom-stump, which he has shouldered for these seven years past, and with which he has never displaced a pound of soil in the whole period. He abominates work with such a crowning intensity, that the very pretence of it is a torture to him. He is a beggar without a beggar's humbleness; and a thief, moreover, without a thief's hardihood. He crawls lazily about the public ways, and begs under the banner of his broom, which constitutes his protection against the police. He will collect alms at a crossing which he would not cleanse to save himself from starvation; or he will take up a position at one which a morning sweeper has deserted for the day, and glean the sorry remnants of another man's harvest. He is as insensible to shame as to the assaults of the weather; he will watch you picking your way through the mire over which he stands sentinel, and then impudently demand payment for the performance of a function which he never dreams of exercising; or

he will stand in your path in the middle of the splashy channel, and pester you with whining supplications, while he kicks the mire over your garments, and bars your passage to the pavement. He is worth nothing, not even the short notice we have taken of him, or the trouble of a whipping, which he ought to get, instead of the coins that he contrives to extract from the heedless generosity of the public.

No. 5 is the *Sunday Sweeper*.—This neat, dapper, and cleanly variety of the genus besom, is usually a young fellow, who, pursuing some humble and ill-paid occupation during the week, eks out his modest salary by labouring with the broom on the Sunday. He has his regular "place of worship," one entrance of which he monopolizes every Sabbath morning. Long before the church-going bell rings out the general invitation, he is on the spot, sweeping a series of paths all radiating from the church or chapel door to the different points of the compass. The business he has cut out for himself is no sinecure; he does his work so effectually, that you marvel at the achievement, and doubt if the floor of your dwelling be cleaner. Then he is himself as clean as a new pin, and wears a flower in his button-hole, and a smile on his face, and thanks you so becomingly, and bows so gracefully, that you cannot help wishing him a better office; and of course, to prove the sincerity of your wish, you pay him at a better rate. When the congregation are all met, and the service is commenced, he is religious enough, or knowing enough, to walk stealthily in, and set himself upon the poor bench, where he sits quietly, well behaved, and attentive to the end; for which very proper conduct he is pretty sure to meet an additional reward during the exit of the assembly, as they defile past him at the gate when all is over. In the afternoon, he is off to the immediate precinct of some park or public promenade; and selecting a well-frequented approach to the general rendezvous, will cleanse and purify the crossing or pathway in his own peculiar and elaborate style, vastly to the admiration of the gaily-dressed

pedestrians, and it is to be supposed, to his own profit. Besides this really clever and enterprising genius, there is a numerous tribe of a very different description, who must sally forth literally by the thousand every Sunday morning when the weather is fine, and who take possession of every gate, stile, and wicket, throughout the wide-spread suburban districts of the metropolis in all directions. They are of both sexes and all ages; and go where you will, it is impossible to go through a gate, or get over a stile, without the proffer of their assistance, for which, of course, you are expected to pay, whether you use it or not. Some of these fellows have a truly ruffianly aspect, and waylay you in secluded lanes and narrow pathways; and carrying a broom-stump, which looks marvellously like a bludgeon, no doubt often levy upon the apprehensions of the timorous pedestrian a contribution which his charity would not be so blind as to bestow. The whole of this tribe constitute a monster-nuisance, which ought to be abated by the exertions of the police.

No. 6 are the *deformed, maimed, and crippled sweepers*, of whom there is a considerable number constantly at work, and, to do them justice, they appear by no means the least energetic of the brotherhood. Nature frequently compensates bodily defects by the bestowal of a vigorous temperament. The sweeper of one leg or one arm, or the poor cripple who, but for the support of his broom, would be crawling on all-fours, is as active, industrious, and efficient as the best man on the road; and he takes a pride in the proof of his prowess, surveying his work when it is finished with a complacency too evident to escape notice. He considers, perhaps, that he has an extra claim upon the public on account of the afflictions he has undergone, and we imagine that such claim must be pretty extensively allowed: we know no other mode of accounting for the fact, that now and then one of these supposed maimed or halt performers turns out to be an impostor, who, considering a broken limb, or something tanta-

mount to that, essential to the success of his broom, concocts an impromptu fracture or amputation to serve his purpose. Some few years ago, a lively, sailor-looking fellow appeared as a one-handed sweeper in a genteel square on the Surrey side of the water. The right sleeve of his jacket waved emptily in the wind, but he flourished his left arm so vigorously in the air, and completed the gyration of his weapon, when it stuck fast in the mud, so manfully by the impulse of his right leg, that he became quite a popular favourite, and won "*copper* opinions from all sorts of men," to say nothing of a shower of sixpences from the ladies in the square. Unfortunately for the continuance of his prosperity, a gentleman intimate with one of his numerous patronesses, while musing in the twilight at an upstairs window, saw the fellow enter his cottage after his day's work, release his right arm from the durance in which it had lain beneath his jacket for ten or twelve hours, and immediately put the power of the long-imprisoned limb to the test by belabouring his wife with it. That same night every tenant in the square was made acquainted with the disguised arm, and the use for which it was reserved, and the ingenious performer was the next morning delivered over to the police. The law, however, allows a man to dispose of his limbs as he chooses; and as the delinquent was never proved to have *said* that he had lost an arm; and as he urged that one arm being enough for the profession he had embraced, he considered he had a right to reserve the other until he had occasion for it—he was allowed to go about his business.

No. 7, and the last in our classification, are the *Female Sweepers*.—It is singular, that among these we rarely if ever meet with young women, properly so called. The calling of a crossing-sweeper, so far as it is carried on by females, is almost entirely divided between children or young girls, and women above the age of forty. The children are a very wandering and fickle race, rarely staying for many weeks together in a single spot. This love of change must militate much against their success, as they lose the advantage of the charitable in-

terest they would excite in persons accustomed to meet them regularly in their walks. They are not, however, generally dependent upon the produce of their own labours for a living, being, for the most part, the children of parents in extremely low circumstances, who send them forth with a broom to pick up a few halfpence to assist them in the daily provision for the family. The older women, on the other hand, of whom there is a pretty stout staff scattered throughout the metropolis, are too much impressed with the importance of adhering constantly to one spot, capriciously to change their position. They would dread to lose a connection they have been many years in forming, and they will even cling to it after it has ceased to be a thoroughfare by the opening of a new route, unless they can discover the direction their patrons have taken. When a poor old creature, who has braved the rheumatism for thirty years or so, finds she can stand it no longer, we have known her induct a successor into her office by attending her for a fortnight or more, and introducing the new comer to the friendly regard of her old patrons. The exceptions to these two classes of the old and the very juvenile, will be found to consist mostly of young widows left with the charge of an infant family more or less numerous. Some few of these there are, and they meet with that considerate reception from the public which their distressing cases demand. The spectacle of a young mother, with an infant on one arm muffled up from the driving rain, while she plies a broom single-handed, is one which never appeals in vain to a London public. With a keen eye for imposture, and a general inclination to suspect it, the Londoner has yet compassion, and coin, too, to bestow upon a deserving object. It is these poor widows who, by rearing their orphaned offspring to wield the broom, supplement the ranks of the professional sweepers. They become the heads of sweeping families, who in time leave the maternal wing, and shift for themselves. We might point to one whom we have encountered almost daily for the last ten years. In 1841, she was left a widow with three small children, the eldest under

four, and the youngest in arms. Clad in deep mourning, she took up a position at an angular crossing of a square, and was allowed to accommodate the two elder children upon some matting spread upon the steps of a door. With the infant in one arm, she plied her broom with the other, and held out a small white hand for the reception of such charity as the passers-by might choose to bestow. The children grew up strong and hearty, in spite of their exposure to the weather at all seasons. All three of them are at the present moment sweepers in the same line of route, at no great distance from the mother, who, during the whole period, has scarcely abandoned her post for a single day. Ten years' companionship with sun and wind, and frost and rain, have doubled her apparent age, but her figure still shows the outline of gentility, and her face yet wears the aspect and expression of better days. We have frequently met the four returning home together in the deepening twilight, the elder boy carrying the four brooms strapped together on his shoulder.

The sweeper does better at holiday seasons than at any other time. If he is blessed with a post for a companion, he decks it with a flower or sprig of green, and sweeps a clear stage round it, which is said to be a difficult exploit, though we have never tried it. At Christmas, he expects a double fee from his old patrons, and gets it too, and a substantial slice of plum-pudding from the old lady in the first floor opposite. He decks the entrance to his walk with laurel and holly, in honour of the day, and of his company, who walk under a triumphal arch of green, got up for that occasion only. He is sure of a good collection on that day, and he goes home with his pocket heavy and his heart light, and treats himself to a pot of old ale, warmed over a fire kindled with his old broom, and sipped sparingly to the melody of a good old song about the good old times, when crossing-sweepers grew rich, and bequeathed fortunes to their patrons.

SAM SUNDRIES AND HIS CONGENERS.

SAM SUNDRIES—to give him the name by which he is universally known among his neighbours—lives in the Bagnigge Wells Road. He keeps a shop, the physiognomy of which, being of a very unpretentious, bottle-blue colour, is anything but prepossessing. Bottles of every known form of configuration, with their concave bottoms uniformly ranged against every pane, fill up the entire window; and the very little light which can succeed in struggling through the prostrate files, reveals to you within a succession of shelves, range above range, still covered with bottles, among which, however, you may discern whole rows of pickling-jars, preserve and jelly-pots, and every species of crockery and corkable glass applicable to the business of the dispensing-room or the kitchen. Bottles, however, are but a small part of his wares —the ostensible head and front of his commercial speculations. The whole domain of Sam Sundries is a warehouse or store-yard, crammed to excess with the *disjecta membra* of past realities. Bricks, pantiles, slates, chimney-pots, wainscottings, doors, windows, shop-fronts, sashes, counters, blocks of stone, bars of metal, rolls of lead, iron-railings, gateways, stoves, knockers, scrapers, pipes and funnels, copper pots, pans, and boilers, and everything which has a name or a use, and many things which have neither, are stored in rich and rusty abundance in the ample yards and sheds in the rear of his residence.

"He will buy anything and everything which the regular dealers have rejected—from the roof of an old house to its rotten kitchen-floor, and from the wardrobe of the master to the perquisite bones and grease of the scullion-wench. Besides a good connection among the medical practitioners of his district, whom he supplies with phials at a fraction under the market-price, he has intimate relations with Monmouth Street and Rag Fair—the denizens of which localities clear off his collections of "toggery" at their periodical visits. His depôt is the daily resort of little speculating builders and repairers; and he reaps a considerable profit by the ready sale to cheap contractors of an infinite variety of materials which it is possible to work up again in the construction of a new edifice. He has a standing agreement with the artists' colourmen, to whom he scrupulously transfers all the old and well-seasoned oak and mahogany panelling that comes in his way, and by whom it is scientifically primed and prepared for the artists' use.

He is, moreover, a builder in a small way himself. In this department he is what the Americans would call a smart man. Having a sharp eye for prospective advantages, he is often unexpectedly discovered to be the proprietor of a little square patch of land lying directly in the track of a new suburban street, where he has run up a wooden hut, tenanted by an Irish labourer, and which has to be purchased at a swingeing price before the new buildings can be completed. He has a dozen or two of nondescript cottages—queer-looking compilations of old bricks and older timber, perched upon "spec." in the precise path of the advancing improvements in the different quarters. He constitutes himself not the pioneer, but the stumbling-block in the march of civilisation. He is part and parcel of the rubbish which has to be moved out of the way. His erections are built up to be pulled down—the sooner the better for him; but his speculations of this nature have a disastrous effect upon the public, through the introduc-

tion of vermin not to be named into new buildings—his colonised old bricks being invariably worked up in the party walls, probably to save the trouble and expense of carting them away.

Though possessed of a vast amount of a rather equivocal description of property, Sam has but little ready money at his command; and the reason is, that much of what is refuse in other men's eyes is treasure in his, and he constantly converts his cash into stock, being tempted by the famous bargains which in his line of business are always to be had. With a floating capital of some "seven pun' ten," he considers himself well furnished for the market; and if any sudden emergency necessitates a greater outlay, he gives his bill, and honours it duly when presented.

Arrived at your dwelling in the pursuit of his vocation—on the eve of the removal-day, we shall say, when you are in a hopeless smotherment with rubbish of all kinds—it is astonishing to witness the ease and celerity with which he sorts, arranges, and values the heterogeneous mass you are anxious to get rid of. He gets through a gross of bottles in a few minutes, rejecting the starred culprits almost instinctively, and ranking the sound ones in rows, ticks them off at so much per dozen. Boots, shoes, boxes, hampers, old hats, old clothes, old books and papers, deal-boards, and abandoned utensils of every sort, are all despatched with equal celerity; and having informed you that "thirty bob is his money for the whole bilin'—take 'em or leave 'em"—a sentence, by the way, from which you could no more move him than you could transplant Niagara to Spitalfields—he politely insinuates that he will, if it is any accommodation to you, remove the broken glass into the bargain, which, as he is known to deal very largely in that material, is not greatly to be wondered at.

Sam Sundries is considered a substantial tradesman, and 'warm man" by his compeers in his immediate neighbour-

''hood, and piques himself not a little upon that respectability, which, having achieved for himself, he proudly regards as his most valuable possession. Though he and his whole family live up to the eyes in lumber of every imaginable sort, and may be seen of a hot summer day dining together from a pound of apocryphal sausages, forked out of the frying-pan, and caught upon a hunch of bread, yet the pride of independence gleams in every eye, from the young bottle-imp who rattles shot in oily phials the livelong day, to the indefatigable mother of the seven Sundries, who to the care of her numerous family adds the service of the shop.

Sam has a host of imitators in the various districts in and around London, of the majority of whom it may be said that, lacking his spirit of speculation and his command of a species of natural arithmetic, which together have been the foundation of his success—for he is utterly devoid of education—they cut but a sorry figure upon small and uncertain gains. Their shops abound in the neighbourhood of Saffron Hill and the Cowgate, and in the whole of the back-way track that leads from Liquorpond Street westward, and in a hundred similar localities besides. Many of them are professedly brokers; but the last page of the auctioneer's catalogue is their vade-mecum; and they may be seen straggling into the sale-room at the termination of the day's business, when the regular professional brokers are leaving, with the view of monopolising the few last lots of sundries at their own price. In this laudable purpose, however, they are often defeated by the presence of one or more sturdy old dowager cook or housekeeper, or owner of a lodging-house, who having sat doggedly through the whole sale without bidding, elevates her sonorous voice at last in favour of the entire shoal of pots, pipkins, pans, and pickle-jars, which are knocked down to her at their full value, to the rage and consternation of her grim and aggravated rivals.

As the current of business does not flow very briskly in the

narrow, tortuous, and poverty-stricken thoroughfares, where necessity has compelled these dealers in odds-and-ends to locate their shops, they find themselves compelled to sally forth in pursuit of that traffic which in some shape or other is indispensable to their existence. Having no very profound or scrupulous convictions on the score of morality to contend with, their invention and ingenuity have free scope; and many and various are the machinations and contrivances by which they manage to recommend their services to certain sections of the public. A small hand-bill, not four inches square—both paper and print being of the last-dying-speech-and-confession quality—is lying upon our desk as we write. It was picked up in the area, where it had been dropped for the special information of the servant-girl; and it instructs all whom it may concern, and female domestics in particular, that John G——, of —— Lane, Clerkenwell, "gives the best price for bones, bottles, rags, and kitchen-stuff, all sorts of wearing apparel, china, glass, and every description of property whatever, *without trouble or inconvenience;*" and further, that the said John G—— "may be relied upon *in all circumstances.*" Another, issued by a member of the same fraternity, copies of which are plentifully circulated at the approach of every recurring quarter-day, and which is palpably intended for the grave consideration of "heads of houses," who may be contemplating a march by moonlight, enlarges upon the immense convenience proffered by Ezra L——, "who has money at command to any amount for the especial accommodation of his friends, and who will take charge of their securities, of whatever kind, *at any hour*—advancing the needful sum before removal." These disinterested announcements, there can be little doubt, procure them favour and encouragement from certain sections of the community, and may go far to account for the abnormal increase in the amount of tradesmen's bills, so mysterious to unsophisticated housekeepers; and also for the sudden abandonment and dismantling of many a well-

furnished house, to the alarm and consternation of the defrauded landlord. But these are bold speculations, contrived and carried into execution by the choice spirits of the class—the underhand Napoleons of industry—and are far above the genius and enterprise of the great majority. Honesty is a policy with some, who to their profession as general dealers add the exercise of some useful craft, which, when there is no demand for it at home, they carry forth into the suburbs, lifting up their voices in the streets, or making application at the doors and areas. Thus if your parlour window has a broken pane, and you do not immediately send for the glazier, it is odds but one of these travelling professionals knocks at your door, and offers to do the necessary repairs at five-and-twenty per cent. less than the trade price; which, having consented to, you find, from the quality of the glass he has inserted, is no bargain after all. Others mend cane-chairs, and will weave a new seat in the course of an hour and a half, at the charge of ninepence, including the materials. Some are unlicensed hawkers of china and glass; but they evade the penalty pronounced by the act of parliament by refusing to take money for their goods, which they barter for any species of domestic refuse, or cast-off apparel. Of these there are a very numerous class who perambulate periodically a regular beat, and who keep up an extensive connection in the prosecution of this kind of barter. Not a few of them are assisted by their wives, who divide the labour with them, taking alternate journeys. The co-operation of the wife is found of considerable advantage in this department of trade, as by her means a greater degree of familiarity with the patrons of this kind of commerce, who are invariably females, is established than could ever be accomplished by the cajoleries of the husband alone. When he starts out upon his expedition, he carries a large basket on his head and a capacious sack slung upon his shoulders. He takes his silent way along the accustomed track, never opening his lips in public, but calling

privately upon his several patrons. "Anything in my way, to-day, marm?" is his modest appeal. If a negative is returned, he loses no time, but vanishes at once. Should, however, the slightest symptom of hesitation be manifested, down drops the basket upon the door-step, and the glittering display of glasses, cruets, bowls, basins, jugs, and dishes, soon operates a decisive effect. The contents of his basket are gradually exchanged for the exuviæ of the various members of the several families on his list, or for such household requisites of a portable description, which with him comprises a wide range, as long service has divested of their original integrity and respectability of appearance — all of which go into the bag, very much, there is scarcely reason to remark, to the advantage of the peripatetic dealer, who, in reverting to the elementary practices of commerce, becomes necessarily from his position his own appraiser and umpire. The wares he carries about with him for disposal are uniformly the defective and rejected productions of the potteries and glass-houses, and are purchased in large quantities, at a very low rate, for this peculiar description of trade.

Sometimes a brace of speculators in sundries will sally forth together on what is technically termed the "pick up." Their object is to buy — no matter what — with a view to a round profit. One of their favourite plans is to call at every open door, professing to give a high price for bottles and old clothes. The farther they get from Bow Bells the more liberal become their offers, until when fairly out in the country, they boldly offer three shillings a dozen for bottles which your wine-merchant sells you for two. But, in fact, bottles they don't want; and, what is more than that, bottles they won't have. The following scene, detailed by an eye-witness, exemplifies their *modus operandi*:—

SCENE—A Wayside Farm. Enter Two Tramps, with Sacks on their Shoulders.

First Tramp. Yah, yah! Now, ladies, bring out your

bottles and old clo'es! Three shillins a dozen for bottles; now's your time! Bring out your old clo'es! Three shillins a dozen—bottles, ho! bottles! bottle—ottle—ottle—ottle—ottles. [*With a gurgling noise like the eruption of double-stout from an uncorked bottle of Guinness.*]

Second Tramp. Yah—ah—ah! Now for the old hats and bonnets! Never mind the dust! Now for the old coats and gownds, pangtyloons and gayters—hainythink! Rummage 'em out—now's your time, ladies!

Farmer's Wife. (*Calling from the casement.*) Here, come in, my good man; I've got a mort o bottles.

Scene changes to Farm-house Kitchen. The Goodwife drags forth a couple of dozen of Black Bottles, and ranks them on the Floor.

First Tramp. Now, look alive, Ned. Go over them there bottles while I looks at the toggery. Where's the old clo'es, marm?

Farmer's Wife. Clothes! I got no clothes to sell as I know of: I haven't a sed nothin' about no clothes.

First Tramp. I daresay you can look up a few, marm. Can't buy all bottles and no clo'es: must be some o' both sorts, marm. Bottles is very well, but must be some clo'es.

Farmer's Wife. Well, let me see; there be an old coat I do think my maister ha' done wi': I'll go and see. Setty down a minnit. [*Exit, and returns in a few minutes with a coat and pair of pantaloons.*] Here be a coat and trousers; what be 'e gwain to gimmy for they?—they baint very hard done by you see.

First Tramp. Let's have a look at 'em. Come, I'll give you a shillin for the two—eightpence for the coat, and fourpence for the pants.

Farmer's Wife. Eightpence for theas coat! Whoy, a's wuth a half-crown, anybody's money!

First Tramp. Lor' love your 'ansome face! How d'yo think

I can give half-a-crown for that there coat when I'm a goin to give three shillin a dozen for bottles?—'taint in reason!

Second Tramp. (*In an audible whisper.*) These is thunderin' good bottles, Bill!

Farmer's Wife. Well, let me see; that 'll make seven shillings altogether. Well, well, I s'pose you must have 'em.

First Tramp. Here, Ned, clap them togs in the bag. I may as well pay you for 'em at once, marm. [*Pays her a shilling, while Ned sacks the clothes.*]

Farmer's Wife. But the bottles! B'aint ee gwain to pay for the bottles?

First Tramp. Oh, sartinly, marm. But you see, lor' love you! we don't car bottles in a bag: we must go and fetch a hamper for them. We'll pay of course, when we fetches 'em away. [*Exeunt Tramps—manet Farmer's Wife in a cloud.*]

The good woman keeps the bottles waiting for the hamper so long as she has any faith in its arrival, but as that consummation is delayed from hour to hour, she at length comes by degrees to appreciate the true nature of the transaction.

The modes of cheating are as various as those of getting a livelihood. The above is but one sample out of thousands of the manner in which the simple are daily mystified by the sharp-witted knaves of the metropolis.

With the exception of some few successful examples who, like Sam Sundries, have got the world under their feet, the dealers of this class occupy a position midway between the keepers of rag-shops, who beneath the auspices of a black doll suspended aloft over the doorway, keep open-house for the reception of bones, rags, and grease, and those connoisseurs in mahogany and French polish,—the furniture brokers. They carry on a branch of commerce which the necessities of a numerous section of society have called into being. In their dark and dingy shops and sheds the poor labourer and scantily-paid artisan finds, at a price commensurate with his means,

the various utensils and appliances of such humble housekeeping as he can afford to maintain; and but for some such a market as their obscure depositories supply, thousands of our fellow-creatures would be reduced to shift without the domestic conveniences of life. It is their task to rescue from the fire and the axe, and from the very jaws of destruction, the worn-out and abandoned implements of housewifery and comfort, contemptuously cast forth from the dwellings of the upper and middle classes, and to refit and re-establish them for the accommodation of the very poor. In the exercise of this vocation they are found to manifest a degree of ingenuity and perseverance worthy of a better reward than it sometimes obtains, seeing that the parties with whom they have mostly to do are even more indigent than themselves. That as a class they are frequently brought into very intimate relations with the police force, and find their wanderings confined for a season to the limited area of a prison cell, does not invalidate the fact, that there are among them many honest and worthy individuals, to whom the world is indebted for much painstaking and ill-requited labour.

THE UMBRELLA PEDLER.

THE trade in second-hand umbrellas is one which is very industriously pursued in every part of the metropolis, although in seasons of dry and fair weather no trace or indication of it may be visible to the most experienced observer. The fall of the barometer, however, lures the hawkers from their hiding-places, and, simultaneously with the pattering descent of the first smart shower of rain, they may be beheld, if not numerous as frogs on the windward bank of a dry pond, yet vocal as their saltatory prototypes, and, like them, rejoicing in the blessed dews of heaven. In them the forgetful pedestrian, who has left his umbrella behind him, encounters accommodating friends, ready to dispense a shelter at any price, from a "tanner" to a "bull," as they phrase it, or from sixpence to a crown-piece. In the neighbourhood of some sheltered court or covered archway, where the crowd have rushed to covert from the rattling storm, the umbrella pedler takes his stand—his back to the breeze, his battered frock buttoned to the chin, his blucher-booted feet firmly planted on the slushy pavement, and his burly figure effectually shielded from the assaults of the tempest beneath the ample dome of gingham upheld in his sturdy fist. With a dozen or two of serviceable umbrellas of every possible colour and material gathered up under his left arm, he stands erect and scornful of the inclement sky; and

as you shrink from the driving sleet or peppering hail, jostling uncomfortably with "damp strangers" beneath the crowded covert, he pits his patience against yours, pretty sure to conquer in the end, unless the heavens prove adverse, and the beams of the returning sunshine put his mercantile prospects to flight. He is an admirable prophet of the weather, and knows far better than did Murphy when the clouds intend to drop fatness. When you see him emerging, stock in hand, from some malodorous alley in the purlieus of Clare Market or Drury Lane, you may set it down as a matter of certainty, whatever be the promise of the hour, that he has derived from some mysterious source or other, infallible indications of impending moisture, and that he is prepared to take advantage of it. A sudden change to wet occurring at eight or nine o'clock on a summer's evening is a special providence in his favour, adding fifty per cent. to the value of his goods, and insuring a certain and rapid market for them. He is off at such a crisis without loss of time to Vauxhall, or Cremorne, or some other popular resort of out-of-door entertainment, where thousands of callow Cockneys, who piously believe that to carry an umbrella is to invite wet weather, are to be found fluttering in their Sunday's best, and in the precise condition he would have them for the encouragement of trade. The disgorgement of Exeter Hall after a May meeting or an Oratorio by Handel, during a summer storm, is a harvest which he is sure to be on the spot to reap. Wherever, indeed, a crowd is caught in the rain he is present to catch the crowd, and on such occasions it need hardly be said, is pretty sure to be well received and well remunerated.

When fine weather has fairly set in, our moist friend disappears from his accustomed stations, and if, as it ought to be, his stock be greatly diminished, he has now the task of replenishing it to perform against the return of the wet season. With this view he makes the tour of London on a principle peculiar to himself: avoiding all the main and business

thoroughfares, he penetrates into the back slums and private-door districts, where, in a monotonous voice, reminding one of the magician's cry in the tale of Aladdin and the Wonderful Lamp—a voice intended for the ears of servant-girls and peculating servitors—he bawls the interesting announcement: "Sixpence for any ole humrellar!" Now as he sells hundreds of umbrellas in the course of the year at sixpence a piece, it is hardly to be expected that this announcement is to be taken in its literal sense. It means, in fact, that he will give sixpence for an article that he approves of. If you offer him a dilapidated machine, he will prove to you logically enough that, so far from being a (wh)ole umbrella, it is only a portion of one, and is therefore only worth a part of the price. He will buy it, however, at his own valuation, be it what it may, as he has ample means in store for supplying all deficiencies. If the relic in question be that of a genuine manufacture, with ribs of actual whalebone, and not the substitute of blackened cane, he will hardly let it escape him unless you are really inordinate in your demand. Umbrellas whose sticks and ribs are of iron are his utter abomination, and he tells you to bring them to him red-hot; he "haves nuffin to do wi' them sort without the chill took orf." It is not always that he pays for his purchases in ready-money: he carries with him on his rounds a dozen or two of tidy little parasols, not too large for a servant-girl to smuggle out of the house in her pocket, in cases where the mistress forbids her domestics the use of such vanities. When he has overhauled the goods he means to buy, "Lookee here, my dear," says he, "if you got a mind to gi' me a bob (that's a shillin you know) and these here three or four bits o' humrellars, you shall have an ansome parrysaul fit for arra lady in town, and take your chice." With that he unfolds his tempting display of bright coloured sunshades, and the bargain is only delayed till the dazzled abigail has fixed her hesitating selection.

When he is sufficiently provided against a rainy day, and

the wet weather, as is sometimes the case, does not set in to suit his convenience, he sets out on a repairing campaign. Furnished with a canvas or leathern bag strapped round his waist, and well supplied with ferrules, handles, tips, and all the little etcetera that go to the construction and reparation of umbrellas, together with a few simple tools, he perambulates the various suburbs and quiet streets of the capital, crying at the top of his voice: "Humrellars to mend!" His ingenuity in the repair of any disorder incidental to the constitution of these useful articles is really marvellous. Your old companion in travel shall have had his brazen nose knocked off—shall have been actually turned inside out by the blustering assault of Boreas—shall have had the whole of his eight ribs wrenched from his spine, besides sundry other minor injuries—and shall yet emerge from the hands of this peripatetic bone-setter restored to his pristine integrity; hale, hearty, strong and serviceable as ever—and all for the small charge of "such a thing as tenpence."

In addition to what may be called his independent trade, carried on on his own account, he is bound by certain contracts to the keepers of retail umbrella and parasol shops. These contracts are not to him of a very profitable description: he has undertaken to do all the repairs required to be done—to medicate the wounds and fractures of each individual sufferer at a price comparable only to that at which a parish doctor is remunerated for attendance upon workhouse patients. Two shillings per dozen is the liberal allowance generally paid by the shopkeeper to the travelling artisan for the repair of umbrellas and parasols, lumping them all together, irrespective of the nature of the injury to be repaired. New coverings of course are not included, and the shopkeeper supplies such new handles as may be necessary: all the rest is furnished by the repairer. Some few of the more liberal dealers allow half-a-crown a dozen, which seeing that sixpence is the lowest charge ever made for a single job to the public, and that the generality

of cases cost the customer a shilling, they can very well afford to do.

Sometimes a member of this fraternity will lay by his umbrellas and repairing-kit for a season, and betake himself to an analogous pursuit in the sale of walking-sticks. In carrying out this branch of his profession, he becomes the subject of a temptation to which he is not always superior. True he is a "natty" hand at a walking-stick; and though he may not be, like Sir Plume, critically correct "in the nice conduct of a clouded cane," he is an admirable judge of the quality of canes in general, from the common chair-bottomed bamboo to the costly amber-coloured Malacca. The perfection of his judgment in this particular has indeed been the source of the moral declension above hinted at. In his purchases of second-hand umbrellas, or perhaps in his barterings with serving-maids at gentlemen's back-doors, he meets occasionally with specimens of which the stick is a good partridge-cane. This, truth compels us to say, he invariably extracts (substituting a common one of beech), and dressing it up as a walking-stick, readily disposes of it as such at the price of a shilling or eighteenpence—the regular price for such a cane being from half-a-crown to three-and-sixpence. The purchaser soon makes the agreeable discovery that he has parted with his money to no purpose, and that his bargain, like most bargains, is good for nothing—the cane proving unsound, and snapping short at about a foot from the lower extremity. He sees when it is too late that his new walking-stick had done service as the rod of an umbrella—that it had been excavated at the part where it has now broken, for the insertion of the spring—that the wood had become rotten from the moisture collected there, and had consequently given way upon the first pressure. It is impossible to detect the imposture by examination before purchase—the cavity being cleverly filled with an imitative composition, and the whole subsequently varnished over.

Not a few of the ambulatory umbrella-merchants and men-

ders are Jews, who are at all times ready and willing to exchange their wares or their skill for any portable species of marketable commodities. The writer many years ago took lessons in Hebrew from a travelling umbrella-mender, who read into such English as he was master of — he being by birth a Pole — any part of the Old Testament with the utmost ease and rapidity. He did the same with equal fluency with a Bible Society copy of the Hebrew New Testament, and plainly showed, by his remarks on what he read, that the contents were entirely new to him.

Not very long ago, a picturesque-looking figure, stately and erect as a young oak, but grizzled with the frost of near seventy winters, knocked with his knuckles at my window, as I sat tapping at the outer wall of my brain, to try if any ideas were within, and civilly requested to know if I had any umbrellas to mend. There was something in the man's face which forbade the abrupt negative that was already upon my lips: age, honesty, suffering, and something besides that is indefinable, compelled me to comply with his desire. He was clad in a garb which bore very solid pretensions to antiquity — smooth and shining with the unctuous friction of years, yet carefully stitched and mended throughout. I judged him to be an old soldier; and mindful of the tale of the "ancient mariner," I found the means of setting him to work upon a job which occupied him for three-quarters of an hour, during which, in compliance with the inquiries I plied him with, he delivered himself at intervals to the following effect: —

"This here's a French humrellar: I know'd he was a Frenchman afore I laid hold of him. I knows the make of that sort well enough. Ha—I reklect the time when we used to get five or six-and thirty shillin' for a good silk un. Free-trade in humrellars and free-trade in bread! Well, one tells up agin t'other, I s'pose. I had a pretty good taste of the French once in my time."

"Have you lived in France?"

"Four year two months and twenty-seven days."

"You have kept a pretty exact account. I hope you enjoyed your sojourn there?"

"Not a bit of it; bein' I went there again' my will, and was a prisoner of war pretty well the whole time."

"Pray, how came that about?"

"Why, you see 'tis more nor forty years agone now—full that since I first went and listed in the army. About the end of 1810 I were servant to an officer, and sailed with my master from Lisbon to join the garrison of English and Spaniards as lay belcaguered by the French in Cadiz. I was onfortnitly took ill of a fever the very day as I stepped aboard, and confined to my berth all the voyage. Having the wea'her again' us, we were sixteen days at sea afore we came in sight of the Isle of Leon. But we never got there: a bad storm druv us ashore full ten miles or more to the west of Cadiz, and we was wrecked. While all hands was trying what they knowed to save the crew and transports, the French kept firing on us all the time."

"Are you sure of that? Such cruelty is not customary in civilized warfare."

"I says nothin' but what's true. You see we had been driving in the storm under bare poles, and hadn't got a flag to strike; so that we couldn't show no surrender: besides, 'twasn't the reglar French army as took us, but a gang of irreglars as worked on their own account again' the British. The want of a flag to strike cost us a good many of our men killed by their shots. There was a good many sick besides myself, for the fever had spread a good deal on board; and when the enemy seen our hands a-gettin' the sick men out in their hammocks, and lowering 'em into the boats, they left off firing; and though they didn't offer no assistance, they allowed us to land as well as we could. We all got ashore

pretty nigh, but every one on us was made prisoners to a gang of fellows made up of the raff of all nations—French, Italian, and Irish volunteers for the most part—fighting for the sake of prize-money under the patronage of Marshal Victor. They forced the Portuguese sailors, and a lot of our own fellows too, to bear a hand in plundering the vessel; and when they had got all they could out of her, they set fire to her. I see her blow up as I lay shiverin' in my hammock under a ledge of a rock in the middle of the night. I was dreadful bad for a long time while we lay in prison that winter, wi' nothin' better than straw for a bed, and that most times wet. They turned the sick out of their hammocks, and bundled us all together upon one heap of rotten straw. But our lads stood by one another, and my master done what he could to have me took care of, though he could not come and see me.

"As the spring come on I got better, along o' many more; though some of the poor fellows died just when they should have got well, for want of warmth and nourishment. The Frenchmen wanted us to work in the trenches, and we might have got out of prison if we would ha' done it. But that didn't suit us, and we were allowed to decline it, preferring to be marched off to prison to France. If I was to live for a thousand years—which, thank Heaven, I shan't—I shouldn't forget that there miserable march. We was seven months on the route, sometimes a target for grilly fighters, who never showed their faces till they sent a volley of shot among us—sometimes short of victuals and water—sometimes camped for the night on the top of a frosty rock without a bit o' coverin' beyond our own flutterin' rags. There was ne'er a bit of shoe or stocking among us by the time we had been a month on the route—no change o' linen—no victuals fit to keep the soul in a man's body—and no bed to lie on arter the horrible fatigue of a march wi' bare feet over a mountaynous country. Many times we was all druv to-

gether into a hole where half on us couldn't lie down at once. A good number of the prisoners got so badly knocked up on the road before we had crossed the mountains, that they was forced to be left behind, where some died, and some got well, and was exchanged, and joined the duke's army. If it hadn't been a little better travellin' in France than it was in Spain, I'm pretty sure I should have left my bones there. We marched all through France into French Flanders. When at last we got to Cambray, there wasn't much more than seventy of us out of well nigh two hundred that escaped out of the vessel. My master was left behind on parole, and was exchanged, and, worse luck for me and him too, poor man, was killed in battle before I got my liberty. 'Tis a bad thing to go to prison, but 'twas the happiest day of my life, 'cept the day as I got out, when I first got into the prison at Cambray, and had a good bed of clean straw to lie upon, and a mouthful of decent victuals to comfort me. I stayed here near three years, and, considerin' all things, wasn't very badly off. My master, while he lived, didn't forget me, and through a French officer as he had made his friend, I got many indulgences and many a good ration from the governor. Perhaps I might have broke out o' prison, and found my way to the coast, as some of my comrades did — though whether they ever reached home I can't tell — but it wouldn't have been handsome in me to return the kindness of the governor by giving him the slip. There came a release for us all when Boney had lost the game."

"Did you get pay for all the time you were in prison?"

"I did; every penny of it, and spent it, like a fool, in double-quick time."

"Was that the end of your soldiership?"

"No. I was transferred to the 21st, and before the end of the year had landed on the shores of the Mississippi, where I got into a worse mess than the tother."

"You mean the affair of New Orleans?"

"I do — I was in it. There ain't much talk o' that in England. 'Twas a shameful bad business."

"It was a fearfully fatal one to the British."

"All owin' to stupid management, sir — nothin' else. We should ha' done the business proper enough if we'd a been well officered. Our generals thought, I s'pose, that we could all eat up half-a-dozen 'Merricans a-piece; but they took care we shouldn't get at 'em, by leaving the scalin' ladders behind. So there we stood at daybreak, close up to their heavy guns, while every shot riddled us through. As it was, we might ha' stood some sort o' chance if we'd a been brought up in line; but in close column as we was, thousands of our men was cut down in next to no time. I hadn't been standin' there three minutes afore I could ha' walked over the muddy canal in front of us, which was about four foot deep, on top o' the dead bodies o' the 44th. I could see an old nigger, not twenty paces in front, grinning at us wi' his white teeth through the fassins, and cramming heavy bags of musket-shot into the muzzle of a thirty-two pounder, and sending certain death to hundreds at every discharge. I would have gave my two arms to have got at the leering devil wi' my teeth. I see Paknum killed by a rifle-shot, and I was druv myself, wi' a lot more, smack agin the fassins by the rush o' the 93rd Highlanders, who scrambled over us into the enemy's works; but not a man of 'em come back to tell what luck he found there. We stood there till more than half of us had nothing to stand on, and then Lambert ordered the retreat to be sounded. It made me sick to stagger back through the piles of dead and dying men, whose brave lives had been fooled away from the want of a little common prudence. If we had been led on by a 'Merrican, we should ha' done just what we did do — that is, walked into the jaws of the very trap that had been so long getting ready for us. Our bad manage-

ment, and the want of a little respect for the enemy, cost us some thousands of lives, and spiled the success of Colonel Thornton, who carried the battery on the tother side o' the river, but was also obliged to retreat, because the whole force was blown to pieces, and there was nothing left to back him. If we had mastered that battery before we did anything else, and reduced the town first on that side of the water, we should have had a different tale to tell about New Orleans at this time o' day. After all, the 'Merricans had no pluck. They might ha' druv us into the river if they had the sperrit to come arter us. They had more than ten thousand men, and we was reduced to two thousand effectives; but they let us retreat in order, with guns and baggage, to our vessels fifteen miles off. That scan'lous affair was the first and last of my military service in 'Merriky. Soon arter that the peace was made, and I got my discharge, along of a bad roomatiz picked up through campin' in the swamps of the Mississippi."

"Of course you have got a pension?"

"No, I han't—no pension, nor no medal, nor no nothin'!"

"How comes that about?"

"I can't tell 'xactly. If I harn't got it, 'taint for want of asking for it. But it seems I didn't take steps as I knowed nothin' about. If I'd done a sartin thing at a sartin time, they tell me that every two years of my service would ha' counted for three, and then the government would ha' had a right to ha' made me a pensioner. They are very sorry, of course, and so am I; but it can't be helped now."

"It is well, then, that you have a resource in your trade. I suppose you learned that after your discharge?"

"No, I didn't, sir. I served my time regularly to the business in that very house that fell down the tother day in Graysher Street, and killed poor Hoolagan, and more besides. Here's your humrellar, sir; I must charge you ninepence for it, and hope you won't think it too much. You see I have new-tipped all

the bones, put on a new ferrule and new cap, repaired the spring, and fastened the handle, which was loose.—Thank'ee, sir — much obliged — proud to do anything for you, sir, at any time. I often comes round this way; if you'd lay by any little jobs for me, sir, you won't say I does 'em badly, sir, or overcharges."

Exit old soldier, carefully closing the garden-gate after him; then, making a speaking-trumpet of his hand, slowly marching off to the tune of "Humrellars to mend! AINY humrellars to me-e-e-end!"

THE BLIND FIDDLER.

One dismally foggy and rainy afternoon in November last, when the streets, clothed in a viscid garment of thick and slippery mud, were passable only at a snail's pace, because every step forward sent you half a step back again—when no one whom fate, or equally inexorable business, did not drive forth, ventured to brave the misty atmosphere fraught with catarrh and influenza—I heard the sound of a fiddle outside my window. The strain was a melancholy attempt at a Scotch reel; and the incongruity of the spectacle it conjured up to my imagination compared with the actual scene before my eyes, had just awaked me to the perception of the comic, when the music ceased on a sudden in the middle of the second stave, and I heard the sound of a fall; and a faint ejaculation, half-sigh, half-groan, which immediately followed, brought me to the door to see what was the matter.

It was already getting dark, independently of the fog, and I could but dimly discern a dusky mass lying by the garden gate; but I could hear the plaintive moans that proceeded from it; and soon, with the help of Betty, whom I had summoned to my assistance, got the wretched bundle of humanity into a chair in front of the glowing kitchen fire. A few spoonsful of diluted brandy soon brought life and animation into a weather-beaten face, and produced from livid lips the eager, almost savage request, "For God's sake, give me a bit of vittles!"

"When did you eat last?"

"Not since yesterday morning. I had a bit of bread yesterday morning."

"Oh!" said Betty, "aint that horrid, and he a blind man — as blind as a stone?" Giving the necessary directions, I left Betty to manage her blind patient in her own way, and in about an hour afterwards went down to see what improvement she had effected.

The poor fellow, having satisfied the demands of nature, and supplied his own wants, had immediately begun to attend to those of his inseparable companion—his cracked, patched, and dilapidated fiddle. I found him airing it tenderly before the fire; then, having borrowed a cloth from Betty, he employed himself in cleansing the crazy instrument from the moist breath of the fog, and from the contaminations it had picked up through his fall. This accomplished, he began feeling it all over as cautiously as a surgeon does the body of a patient in search of a fracture. Fortunately there was no serious mischief done, and the poor fellow laughed cheerfully when he discovered that the only friend he had in the world had escaped unhurt.

"Well, my man," said I, "how do you get on? Not hungry now, I hope?"

"Bless 'ee, sir, no! I'm righter than a trivet now, sir. I ha'nt had sich a feed I can't tell 'ee when, sir. I'm very much obleeged to you, sir, sure*ly*. I wor altogether done up, and that's a fact."

"Well, then, perhaps you have no objection to return the favour we have done you by telling me how you came to be a blind fiddler, what you get by it, how you manage to live, and all about it!"

"Not a bit of objection in the world, sir, if you likes to hear it. There aint much fun in what I got to tell though, cos I ha'nt had much luck in my time: but if you wish to

hear it, of course you shall, and I'll begin at the beginning. I'm quite agreeable, sir."

With that, laying his fiddle to rest in an old black bag which he drew from the crown of a crushed hat, and settling his arms on the elbows of the chair, so as to rest his whole frame in a state of unaccustomed luxury, he delivered himself literally, with the exception of certain circumlocutions which I have thought fit to digest into something like order and consecutiveness, pretty much to the following effect: —

"I aint but a youngish man, sir, though they do tell me that I looks a reg'lar old file. What might you suppose my age, sir?"

"From forty-eight to fifty, or thereabouts."

"There 'tis agin. Everybody says I'm fifty, when I'm not forty yet. I was born in 1811, sir, in Swan Alley, not far from the Artillery Ground. My father wor a shoemaker— perhaps I ought to say a cobbler, for he didn't make many shoes; good reason why, he was always a-mendin' on 'em. When I was a very little un, I rek'lect partik'lar they was a-making the Regent's Canal as runs under the City Road, and I used to get out afore I was big enough to wear trowsers, and make mud-pies out of the clay as was turned up. That was the best fun I ever knowed, that was; but didn't I get the strap when my father catched me at it? Ah, I knows what strap-sauce is well enough! He wanted to teach me— cos I was the biggest boy—to make wax-ends, and I wanted to make mud-pies; and many's the lickin' I got along o' that there canal a-diggin'. I never passes the bridge now without thinkin' on it. Then, you know, I could see—had as good use of my eyes as anybody. Ha! well! 'taint no use grievin'.

"Mother died, and left four on us when I was about five years old, and then we got more strap and less vittles, I can tell 'ee. Father got savage, an' took to drinkin', and we never dared to have a bit o' lark 'cept when he was out

o' doors. One night, when he was gone to the public-house, we was all a-playin' and larkin' in the room, and my brother, out o' fun, pushed me right over the kit into the fire. I fell with my face slap in the middle of the hot coals, and was so frightened that I couldn't make no attempt to get out, cos my legs was up in the air again' the kit. My two brothers and sister sung out a good un, and a ooman as lived up-stairs come down and picked me out. I was took off to the hospital, where I laid for seven months, and a'most died wi' brain fever. Then I was sent home again, stone-blind, and father give me a hidin' for tumblin' into the fire, as if I hadn't had punishment enough. But I didn't care much for that. I had friends in the court, among the women and the gals, and I got a deal more vittles and kindness than I did afore.

"When I was old enough, I was sent to the Blind Asylum, where I learned to make baskets and mats. I can make clothes-baskets and hampers, and that sort of work, well enough; but the trade is so much cut up by the shops that it aint worth doin'. If I makes a basket for a washerooman for three shillins, it costs me half-a-crown for the willows. It aint much better with the mats—the rope costs almost the money they fetch. I left the asylum when I was sixteen, and lived along with another blind man as made hampers for the wine-merchants. He had a pretty good trade, and I might ha' done well along of him if I could ha' carr'd home the goods; but it aint no go for a blind man to get about the streets o' London wi' five or six hampers on his head. I tried it once or twice, and got shoved head-foremost into a butcher's shop by some chaps as wanted a lark; so he couldn't send me out no more, and he couldn't go hisself. I had two years of that there hamper-work, and got the rheumatiz dreadful through workin' in a damp cellar all day long, and I was obliged to give it up—to go into the hospital again.

"When I come out I didn't know where to go, and what I was to do. My father had moved away somewheres, and my

two brothers had gone to sea. So I went to my parish, and had a go of the workhouse for matter of a year. There was a blind man in there as played the fiddle uncommon well, and the overseer made him show me a bit, and paid a goodish bit o' money for teachin' of me. I scraped away whenever they would let me, for I wanted to get out of the workhouse, and I picked up a tidy lot of tunes in four or five months. By the time I'd been at it a year, I thought I might manage to pick up a livin', and I turned out one mornin', when the summer was a-comin' on, and begun fiddlin' in the streets. I didn't get much the first day—not quite sixpence I think 'twas—but I wouldn't go back upon the parish. I could lodge for a shillin' a week, and I could get a bit of broken vittles at times when folks wouldn't give me no money. I liked my liberty too well, after the confinement—first of the damp cellar, then of the hospital, and then in the workhouse—and I made up my mind to get my own livin' without bein' beholden to nobody. So I've a-fiddled pretty well ever since.

"When I were two-and twenty, I took it into my head uncommon as how I should like to learn to read; so I went and applied at the Blind School in Red Lion Square, and used to go there and learn to read two or three nights of a week. There was a good many there, and some on 'em learned to read very well, and some couldn't learn nohow. I got on tolerablish. I went to the school more nor a year. We didn't pay nothin' for teachin'—only for the books: the books is very dear; the letters sticks up, and we feels 'em with our fingers. I gave four shillins for Izayer. I can read all on it, and John's Gospel too. That's all I got. I can't afford to buy no more.

"At the Blind School I fell in with a young ooman as was learnin' to read. I kep company with her for five year, and then I married her. We've a been married nigh upon twelve year. She was born blind—never had no eyes in her head, not at all. She can do everything in a house as well a'most as

them as can see: she can cook a meal's vittles beautiful, when we got it to be cooked. She sews with her needle, and mends my clothes, and does the washin' and ironin'. We are often very bad off, partik'lar at this time of the year. People don't care much about fiddlin' and music in cold and wet weather: they walks away to keep theirselves warm; and forgits to give a fellar a copper.

"I knows London all over, 'cept some of the new streets, and I knows them when I been through 'em once. I goes from Islington, where I lives, to the City, three times a week. When I come to a street where a customer of mine lives, I begins and numbers the houses with my stick, and then I strikes up when I comes to the house, and plays till I gets my penny or my bread and cheese. I always eats a piece of bread in the mornin' afore I goes out; if I don't I gits the stomach-ache. Sometimes I don't git no more all the day; but I gits bread and cheese at a house in Clerkenwell every Tuesday, and a good pint o' tea and a poun' a'most o' bread every Friday in Little Saint Thomas Apostle. You see I can't fiddle very well, cos my right arm is shrivelled up wi' the fire, and I can't draw the bow rightly level with the bridge athout I sits down; and in course I can't sit down while I am walkin' about the streets; so it aint many coppers I gits from chance customers. My reg'lar customers mostly gives me a penny a week: when they moves, I follers 'em wherever they goes: I can't afford to lose 'em; they brings me in, all on 'em, about three-and-sixpence a week, besides the vittles. 'Taint much vittles I eats at home, save on Sundays, and a bit o' bread for breakfast afore I starts out of a mornin'.

"There's lots o' blind men in London as gets a livin' without earnin' of it. I knows one as sits all day in the City Road a-readin' the Bible wi' his finger, and people thinks it's wonderful clever, and gives him a sight o' money. A poun' a week aint nóthin' to him. But that there's a imposition;

there aint nothin' in it. I can read as well as he every bit; but people hadn't ought to get their bread by readin' the Bible and doin' of nothin'; it aint respectable. I gives the people music: if they don't think it worth nothin', they gives me nothin' for it; if they do, they gives me a copper, and very glad to git it. There's some blind men as keeps standins in the street, and sells sticks, and braces, and padlocks, and key-rings; some on 'em drives a good trade. I knows one as got a family brought up quite respectable—the boys is 'prentices, and the gals goes to service. I should like to keep a standin' myself if I had a few poun's to begin with; but, Lord! I never had but one sovereign in my hand in my life, and that wasn't mine. There's lots o' blind men goes about wi' dogs tied to a string: them's beggars. When a blind man drives a dog, he've a-made up his mind to be a gentleman. A dog aint of no real use to a blind man in London—not a bit in the world. A dog is a blind beggar's sign; and when the dog carries a tray in his mouth to catch the coppers, then there's two beggars instead o' one. There's a sight o' blind men in London as can see as well as you can. They starts out when 'tis dark, wi' great patches over their eyes, and goes wi' a boy—a young thief—to lead 'em, among the crowds and in the markets of a Saturday night. When they gets into the thick of it they sings out, 'Good Christians! for the love of Heaven bestow your charity upon the poor blind—and God preserve your precious eyesight.' That's their chant. They gits a lot o' money from the people, partik'lar on Saturday nights, when the small change is flyin' about; them's robbers, an' nothin' else. There's some poor fellows as I knows as can't do nothin' for a livin'. Blind men is often weak in the head—a bit silly-like. They mostly lives in work-houses; sometimes they tries it on wi' lucifer-matches: they likes to get out in the sun in summer-time and fine weather: I pities them, poor fellows! 'tis hard luck they've got.

"I'm always cheerful-minded 'cept when I'm very hungry and got nothin' to take home to my wife. We don't want much—'tis very little as keeps her; but I don't like to go home without nothin' in my pocket: then I sometimes thinks 'tis too bad, and gets low-spirited; but I soon goes to sleep and forgits it, cos I'm so tired when I goes home. My wife earns somethin' most weeks; sometimes she looks arter little children when their mothers goes out a-charin. She haves three-halfpence a day for a child: when we got two babies for a week that makes eighteenpence, and pays the rent. A good thing that would be if we could do it always. She's very fond o' little babies, and knows how to do for 'em as well as a mother a'most, though she never had none of her own.

"Saturday's my best day. My customers knows I can't play the fiddle of a Sunday, and so I gits a good allowance of vittles, and fills my bag. There's a butcher not far off as gives me a reg'lar good stew o' bones an' cuttin's every Saturday night. That's my Sunday's dinner, and a famous dinner my wife makes on it. There's a policeman out here as collars me reg'lar whenever my bag's a bit full, and turns it all out, and axes me where I stole it. I says: 'I'll answer that there question at the station-house, if you likes to take me there;' but he never takes me up. That's a noosance, that is!

"I never buys no clothes; I git as much as I want gave me. The boots is the worst. In course I never gits them till they're worn out; and as I cant afford to have 'em mended, when it rains my feet is always in the wet; but I'm pretty well used to it—that's one good thing. This time o' the year 'tis very bad: there is so much bad weather, and so few people about, a blind fiddler might as well stay at home. There's been nothin' but rain all the week. I only earned twopence yesterday, and that just made up the rent as was over-due: there was nothin' for supper, though I'd had nothin' all day but a bit o' bread in the mornin', and to-day there was none for me to have, so I come away without any. My wife

have had her vittles to-day, that's one comfort: she went out afore I did to go a-washin'; she'll earn sixpence besides her vittles—and we shall have a good supper to-night, thank God!

"I've had a good many accidents in my time. There is so many omnibuses now, that a blind man can't venture off the pavement. It takes me half an hour sometimes to get across from the "Angel" into the City Road. I've been knocked down by cabs and omnibuses six or seven times; I never got much hurt myself, but my fiddle have been broke all to pieces several times. I always mend it myself, but it's a deal o' trouble and loss of time while the glue's a-dryin'. Drunken men is worse than omnibuses. I've been beat about by drunken men many's the time, cos I couldn't play the tunes they wanted. I never goes into a public-house now: I had so many tricks put upon me, that I finds it better to keep away. I was a'most killed once by a lot o' Irishmen: they knocked me about dreadful, and filled my fiddle full o' beer, and then made me play upon it, and cut the strings while I was a-playin'. They done that cos I'm a very little fellow, and got no strength. That's too bad! Sometimes gentlefolks is none too civil. Just afore I come to your gate, I tried at a house a little way down the road: a gentleman come a rushin' out, catches me by the throat, and twistis me roun' and roun', and shoves me over the steps, a-swearin' as how he'd got two scrapers at his door a'ready, and didn't want another. That aint civil, seein' I fiddles as well as I can, and he got no call to pay for it if he ha'nt a mind to.

"I dont know as I can tell you anythin' more, sir. You see I don't know much of the world. All days is pretty much alike to me: wet or dry, hot or cold, is all the difference between one day and another. We does the best we can. When the sun shines, and people walks about and enjoys themselves, I gits a little money, and my wife and I is cheerful and contented. When the bad wintry weather comes down upon us, we do feel what it is to be hungry and poor; but we can't

help it, and it aint no use frettin'. We might git into the workhouse in the winter if we liked, but then we must sell up all our sticks, and I should lose all my customers where I plays reg'lar, and have to begin the world agin when we come out in the summer. It wouldn't do, that wouldn't.

"My wife's a merry little ooman, and can go without a dinner and never grumble: many's the day she gits no vittles, no more than myself. When there aint no vittles in the cupboard, and no means of earnin' any, I tells her not to git up, and so she lies abed all day, cos 'tis easier fastin' in bed than when you are up and about. If I brings home anythin', then she gits up and cooks it, and then we're all right. We always hopes for better times, and if we don't live to see 'em why then we shan't grieve for the want of 'em. I plays the song, *There's a good time comin', boys,* and my wife sings it. There's no harm in hopin' that we may all live to see it. That's all I've got to say, sir."

With that this uncomplaining heir of adverse fortune rose from his seat, placed his fiddle under his arm, and thanking me warmly for all favours, groped his way up the kitchen stairs and took his departure. I have given his history as he detailed it: it has had no colouring and requires no comment at my hands. It is just one of those revelations of the mysteries of common life which are only remarkable because the world in general has not chosen to make them the object of remark. But verily it has a use and a signification which discontented respectability, cushioned in its easy-chair, may do well to ponder.

THE NEWSBOY'S DAY.

CHARLEY POTTER is Polly Potter's biggest boy; and Polly Potter is a hard-working woman, with another boy and a baby to provide for, whose father died in the hospital the same week the baby was born. Mrs. Potter lives in one of the courts running out of St. Martin's Lane, in a central nest of struggling poverty and hardship, situated not very far from the National Gallery. Ever since Tom Potter's death, owing to a fall from a scaffolding, to say nothing of the weary weeks he lay ill, it has been work or starve — do or die — with the Potter family. The club-money luckily came in at the death and birth, and helped the widow over the double trouble; and as soon as she got upon her feet, she set about helping herself. She took Charley, who was going in thirteen, and as sharp a young fellow as need be, away from school, and told him he must now go to work instead of his father — a proposition which the boy accepted in the very spirit of a young middy unexpectedly promoted to a lieutenancy; and thus it was that the child became, in a manner, a man at once. By the recommendation of Polly's old master, a tradesman in the Strand, Charley was helped to employment from a newspaper agent, whom he serves manfully. While Polly is at home washing or ironing, or abroad charin' or nussin', little Billy meantime taking care of the baby, we shall amuse ourselves by following Charley through the routine of one day's operations. It may

not be altogether time thrown away: there is many an old boy as well as a host of young ones who may learn a lesson from it.

It is a dark, dreary, and foggy morning in January; the wind is driving from the south-east, bringing along with it a delicious mixture of snow and rain; and it yet wants two hours of daylight, when Charley, slinking from the side of his sleeping brother, turns out of bed, and dons his clothes. He has no notion of washing his face just yet—that is a luxury which must be deferred till breakfast-time, which is a good way off at present. The pelting sleet, the driving wind, and the fog are such small trifles in his category of inconveniences, that he takes no more notice of them than just to button his jacket to the chin, and lug his cloth cap down over his eyes, as he gently shuts the door after him, and steps out into the darkness. Then he digs his hands into his pockets, and bending his head towards the storm, in the attitude of a skater in a Dutch frost-piece, steers round the steps of St. Martin's Church, and then straight on through the Strand and Temple Bar, and along Fleet Street, near the end of which he disappears suddenly in the dark and narrow maw of Black-Horse Alley. This Black-Horse Alley is a place of no repute at all: among all the courts and closes which debouch into Fleet Street on either side of the way, it is almost the only one which is not celebrated for something or somebody or other in records either literary or dramatic, ghostly or convivial. By daylight it is particularly dirty, dark, and unsavoury, having no outlet but a narrow one at the centre, on the right, which lands the explorer in Farringdon Street, opposite to the ruined gateway of what a few years ago was the Fleet Prison. A black horse, or a horse of any colour, once fairly in the alley, would find it a difficult matter to turn round, and would have to back out, or else, like an eel in a water-pipe, wait till destiny chose to release him. Wretched old tenements are the tall buildings on either side, which shut out the daylight from the court, and

one, the biggest of them all, belongs to an association of newsmen; being open all day, and very likely all night too, for we never saw it shut, it serves as a central depôt whence whole tons of newspapers, received damp from the printing-machine, take their departure daily for all parts of the kingdom.

Here we must follow close upon the heels of Charley. Diving into the court, and proceeding a score of yards or so, we find the old house bathed in a flood of gaslight from top to bottom. Men and boys are rushing up and down the angular stairs, some with damp loads upon their backs, and others hastening off to procure them. The morning papers have all been "put to bed," as it is termed, and their respective machines are now rolling off copies, each at the rate of several thousands an hour. As fast as they come into being, they are counted off in quires, and borne away by the agents, who undertake to supply the country districts. An enormous number of them come on the shoulders of the newsboys to Black-Horse Alley. On the top-floor of the house — and we notice, as we ascend, that all the floors are furnished and occupied alike — we find Charley already at his work. He stands with a score of other lads and men, behind a continuous flat deal-board, which runs round the whole circuit of the floor, elevated on tressels, and standing about two feet from the wall. Those next him are folding, packing, and bundling up papers in time for the morning mail, which will carry them to Bristol and to Birmingham, more than a hundred miles distant, and to a hundred places besides, in time to lay them upon the breakfast-tables of the comfortable class. Charley, with paste-brush and printed addresses, is as busy as the best. *Post*, *Herald*, *Chronicle*, *Advertiser*, and *Daily News* are flying about like so many mad flags amidst the clamour of voices, the stamping of feet, and the blows of hard palms upon wet paper. By and by the *Times*, which, on account of its omnivorous machine, can afford to sit up longer, and go to bed later than

its contemporaries, pours in a fresh flood of work. All hands go at it together; but as fast as one huge pile is cleared off, another comes, and neither the noise nor the activity relents until the moment for posting draws nigh, when the well-filled bags are hoisted on young shoulders, or piled on light traps waiting close by in the street — and off they roll or run to the post-office. Charley himself staggers out of Black-Horse Alley, looking, with a huge bag upon his shoulders, like a very great bird with a very small pair of legs, and in six and a half minutes — the exact time allowed — shoots his body into the aperture at St. Martin's-le-Grand, and, catching up the emptied bag, which flies out upon him the next moment, walks leisurely away.

Charley knows now that the immediate hurry is over, and, in spite of the rain which still continues to drizzle down, he has a game at bolstering a comrade with his empty bag, in which friendly interchange of civilities the two together make their way, not back to Black-Horse Alley, but to their master's shop, at which they arrive before it is open, and before the neighbours are up. Here they meet half-a-dozen more boys, distributors hired by the week to do a few hours' work in the morning, in the delivery of newspapers to subscribers. The post-office, which will carry a stamped newspaper 100 or 500 miles for nothing, will not carry it a short distance without payment of a penny, and therefore the newsman has to deliver by private hand all papers within the limits. For this responsible commission, there are always plenty of candidates among the London boys; and here are half a dozen of them this morning waiting the arrival of the master with his budget. Pending his advent, as the rain peppers down unceasingly, they wrap their bags round their shoulders, and, arranging themselves in a rank under the projecting eaves of the shop-window, commence the performance of an impromptu overture with their heels against the wooden framework that supports the shutters which they are polishing with their backs. The

neighbours know this sort of demonstration well enough; it is as good as Bow Bells to all within hearing, and has the effect of rousing many a sleeper from his bed. Day has dawned during the performance, and, soon after, the master's little pony-cart is seen in the distance rattling over the stones. He jumps out of the trap almost before it has stopped, throwing Charley the key of the shop-door. The boy has the door open and the shutters down in an instant; the piles of newspapers are transferred from their swaddling blankets to the counter, and as rapidly as is consistent with a cautious accuracy, they are allotted, among the different distributors, each of whom, as he receives his complement, starts off upon his mission. Charley has a round to go over, the course of which has been suited to his convenience, as its termination will bring him within a short distance of his own home, where he arrives by nine o'clock.

Before breakfast, he makes his toilet, and rubs off the residuum of London particular which has accumulated upon his skin within the last twenty-four hours. This necessary preliminary settled, he addresses himself to sundry logs of bread and butter, and a basin of scalding coffee, which has been kept simmering on the hob for him. Solid and fluid are dispatched with a relish that is to be earned only by early rising and out-door work. He talks as he eats, and tells his mother the news which he has contrived to pick up in the course of the morning — particularly about that murder over the water, and the behaviour of "the cove what's took in custody about it." Perhaps he has an extra paper; and if so, he reads a bit of the police-reports, especially if anybody in the neighbourhood is implicated in one of the cases. Breakfast over, he get's back to his master's shop, where he finds a bundle of newspapers ready for him, which he is directed to get rid of at the railway station, if possible. For a certain reason, well known to master and servant, he has a decided fancy for this part of his business; and he loses no time in transporting himself to an

arena always favourable to this branch of commerce. The bustle of trains arriving and departing excites his spirits and energies, and, determined on doing business, he gives full scope to his lungs. "*Times, Times* — to-day's *Times! Morning Chronicle! Post! Advertiser! Illustrated News!* Who's for to-day's paper? Paper, gentlemen! News, news! Paper, paper, paper! *Chronicle!* — Who's for *Punch?*" In this way, he rings the changes backwards and forwards, not even pausing while engaged with a customer, and only holding his peace while the station is vacant. Then he takes breath, and perhaps, too, takes a dose of theatrical criticism from the columns of the *Chronicle*, or of the last new jokes in *Punch*. The arrival of a new batch of passengers wakes him up again, and he is among them in a moment, with the same incessant song and the same activity. His eyes are everywhere, and he never loses a chance; he cherishes the first-class carriages especially, and a passenger cannot pop his head out of window for a moment, without being confronted with the damp sheet of the *Times*, and assailed with the ringing sound of his voice. Charley generally continues this traffic till dinner-time, which with him is at one o'clock. Whether he continues it after that time, is a matter frequently left to his own discretion; and as he has an interest in exercising that upon sound principles, we may be sure he does the best he can.

The newsboy's dinner might be described in mathematical terms as an "unknown quantity." It may consist of a warm and savoury mess, discussed at leisure beneath the eye of his mother, or it may be a crust of bread and cheese, eaten in the streets while hurrying shopwards from the station of a railway, or the deck of a steam-boat. Sometimes he has to eat dinner and supper "all under one," cheating his appetite in the interim with a hunch of bread and a cup of coffee; at other times, he will patronise the pie-shops, and dine upon eel or mutton pies. But, dinner or no dinner, he must be at the beck and bidding of his master early in the afternoon, to give in an

account of his sales and stock, and to assist in the important proceedings which have to be gone through before the departure of the evening mails. Of course, it is the object of every newsman to get rid, if possible, of all the papers he buys; for if they are kept to the next day, they are worth only half-price; and if a day beyond that, they are but waste-paper. The newsman, therefore, has in one sense to take stock every day—in fact, oftener; and the evening post-hour, which is six o'clock, is to be looked upon as the hour for striking a balance of profit: because, whatever is left on hand after that hour has struck, is wholly or partially a loss. Newspapers which have been lent by the hour, have to be collected in time for the evening mail, or they may some of them be left for further hire, and go as half-pricers next morning. Charley is running about on this business for an hour or two in the afternoon; and it happens to-day that by five o'clock, or a little before, his master has discovered that he has more of one or two of the daily papers than he wants, and that he is short of others, which he must procure to supply his country customers. It would be very easy to purchase those he wants, but in that case it might be impossible to sell those he does not want, and the loss of the sum they cost would constitute an unwelcome drawback to the profits of the day's business. But it happens that there are a score of other newsmen in the same awkward predicament—a predicament which is sure to recur to most of them every day in the week, and which has, therefore, begotten its own remedy, as all difficulties of the sort invariably do in London. The remedy is the Newspaper Exchange, which has its locality in no recognized or established spot, though it is oftener held in Catherine Street, Strand, or at St. Martin's-le-Grand, in front of the Post-office, than elsewhere. This Exchange, it is said, originated with the newsboys; and though it has been in existence, to our knowledge, for a dozen years at least, boys are the only members to this hour. It consists of a meeting

in the open street, very rapidly assembled—the parties appearing on the ground soon after four in the afternoon, continuing to increase in numbers until after five—and still more rapidly dispersed, under pressure of the Post-office, when the business of the hour has been transacted.

On the present occasion, Charley is entrusted with a dozen newspapers which are of no use to his employer, and his mission is to replace them by as many others, which are wanted to go into the country by the six o'clock post. He tucks them under his arm, and, it being already upon the stroke of five, is off towards 'Change as fast as he can run. He can hear the sharp eager cries of the juvenile stock-brokers as he rounds the corner: "*Ad.* for *Chron.*," "*Post* for *Times*," "*Post* for *Ad.*," "*Herald* for *Ad.*," "*Ad.* for *News*," &c., including well nigh all the changes that can be rung upon all the London newspapers. He mingles with the throng, and listens a moment or two. At the sound of "*Ad.* for *Chron.*," he explodes suddenly with a "Here you are!" and the exchange is effected in that indefinable fraction of time known among newsboys as "two twos." "*Times* for *Chron.*" is an offer that suits him again, and again the momentary transfer is effected. Then he lifts up his voice, "*Post* for *Times*, *Chron.* for *Times*," and, bestirring himself, effects half-a-dozen more exchanges in less time than we should care to mention—now and then referring to the list of his wants, and overhauling his stock, in order to be sure, amidst the excitement of the market, that he is doing a correct trade. He finds, after half-an-hour's bawling and bargaining, that he wants yet a *Times* and an *Advertiser*, and he knows there is a boy present who has them to dispose of, but Charley has not in his stock what the other wants in exchange. So he sets about "working the oracle," as he terms it: instead of bawling "*Chron.* for *Times*," which is the exchange he really desiderates, he bawls "*Chron.* for *Post*," because the boy with the *Times* wants a *Post* for it,

which Charley hasn't got to give; but by dint of bawling he at length gets a *Post* for his *Chronicle*, and then he is in a condition to make the desired exchange. Sometimes he will go so far as to "work the oracle" three or four deep—that is, he will effect three or four separate exchanges before he has transmuted the newspaper he wanted to get rid of into the one he desired to possess—or changed bad stock into good: by such intricate exploits, he has obtained among his fellows the reputation of a "knowing young shaver;" and it is to be hoped that he gets, in reward of his ingenuity, something more substantial from his employer, for which the little family at home is none the worse.

Before the affairs on 'Change have come to their sudden conclusion, Charley is back to the shop; and now all hands are busy in making up the big bag, which must start on its passage to the Post-office, at the very latest, by ten minutes before six, the distance being fully a nine minutes' walk. There is the same ceremony with the evening papers as there was with the morning ones, and there is the same limit as to time for its performance. But what must be done *must*, and of course *is* done; and in a well-ordered concern, like that of which young Potter is a member, it is done in good time too. Before the race against the clock commences, Charley has got the bag hoisted on his shoulders, and, with a fair couple of minutes to spare, is trudging steadily towards St. Martin's-le-Grand. We shall leave him to find his way there, which he can do well enough without us, and walk on before, to see what takes place at the post-office at this particular hour of the day.

On ascending the steps of the huge building, which, huge as it is, is found to be all too small for the rapidly-increasing correspondence of the country, we find that we are by no means singular in harbouring a curiosity to witness the phenomena which attend upon the last closing minutes of the hour whose expiry shuts up the post for the night. The broad area

between the lofty pillars that support the roof is peopled with some hundred or two of spectators, come, like ourselves, to observe the multitudinous rush of newspapers and letters which, up to the very last moment, are borne by the living tide into the many-mouthed machine which distributes them through the length and breadth of the land—nay, of the entire globe. Policemen are in attendance to keep a clear passage, so that the very last comer shall meet no obstruction in his path. The spectators marshal themselves on the right of the entrance, leaving the left free to all who have letters or papers to deposit. These comprise every class of the community, commercial and non-commercial—clerks from counting-houses, lawyers from the Temple, messengers from warehouses, young men and maidens, old men and merchants, rich men and poor men, idlers and busybodies. As closing-time approaches, and the illuminated dial above points to five minutes to six, the crowd increases, and the patter of approaching footsteps in quick time thickens on the ear. Sacks, of all shapes and sizes, bulgy and slim, are seen walking up the stairs—some as long as bags of hops, beneath which the bearers stagger unsteadily towards the breach; others, of more moderate capacity, containing but a couple of bushels or so of damp sheets; and others, again, of hardly peck measure. All discharge their contents into the trap nearest the entrance, in which operation they are assisted by a man in a red coat, who, from long practice, has acquired the knack of emptying a bag of any size and returning it to the owner with one movement of his arm. By and by, as the lapsing minutes glide away, he is besieged in his position by the rush of bags, and looks very likely to be buried alive, until somebody comes to his assistance. The bags, as fast as they arrive, disappear through the wide orifice, and anon come flying out again empty—you don't exactly see from whence. Here comes a monster-sack, borne by two men, which is with difficulty lugged into quarters,

while others crowd after it, like a brood of chickens diving into the hole through a barn-door after the mother-hen.

Now is the critical moment—the clock strikes, clang!—in go a brace of bulky bags; clang! the second—in go three more rolling one over another, and up rushes a lawyer's clerk, without his hat, which has flown off at the entrance, and darts forward to the letter-box at the further corner, fencing his way with a long packet of red-taped foolscap, with which he makes a successful lunge at the slit, and disappears; clang! the third—another brace of sacks have jumped down the throat of the post-office, and more yet are seen and heard scrambling and puffing up the steps; clang! the fourth—and in goes another bouncing bag, followed by a little one in its rear; clang! the fifth—nothing more, a breathless pause, and a general look of inquiry, as much as to say: "Is it all over?" No! here comes another big bag dashing head-foremost up the steps; in it rushes like mad, when, clang! the sixth—and down falls the trap-door, cutting it almost in two halves as it is shooting in, and there it lies, half in and half out, like an enormous Brobdignag rat caught in a murderous Brobdignag trap, only wanting a tail to complete the similitude. The bearer, who is in a bath of perspiration, wipes the dew from his face as he glances round with a look of triumph. He knows that if there is a doubt whether he was in legal time or not, he will, by established custom, be allowed the benefit of the doubt, and that because the post-office could not shut his bag out, they are bound to take it in. He is perfectly right: in less than a minute (minutes in this case are important), the bag is drawn in, and returned to him empty, and he joins the crowd, who, the exhibition being over, disperse about their business. It is a very rare occurrence for a bag of newspapers to arrive too late for the evening post. We have known it to take place occasionally; but when it does happen, we suspect that if the failure were traced to its source, it would be found to arise

from the enterprising spirit of some defiant newsboy, who had resolved to win a race against time, and had failed in doing it. Boys have been known before now (we have seen it done) to carry their bags within very good time to what they consider a practicable distance, and then to halt, waiting for the first stroke of the bell, the signal for a headlong scamper over the remaining ground, which has to be traversed while the clock is striking. It may well happen occasionally that this daring experiment is not successful, in which case the over-confident urchin has to return with his bag unloaded, to the consternation of his employer and his own disgrace.

Charley knows better than that. We have seen him discharge his load among the first arrivals; and now, in consideration of the early hour at which his services were required in the morning, his work is done for the day, and he strolls leisurely homeward. He is rather tired, but not knocked up, nor anything like it. There is a substantial supper waiting him, which having well earned he has a right to enjoy, as he does enjoy it, without a single feeling of dissatisfaction. After his repast, if the weather is dry, he will have a chase with young Bill round the fountains in Trafalgar Square; or if it is wet and cold, there will be a game with the baby before the fire; or if the baby should be asleep, Bill will get a lesson in pot-hooks and hangers, with slate and pencil for materials, and Charley for writing-master; or he will have to spell out a column of last week's news, subject to the corrections of his teacher. These pleasures and pursuits, however, cannot be protracted to a very late hour. Early rising necessitates early rest; and the boys are, therefore, despatched to bed when the bell of the neighbouring church rings out nine, that the newsboy may recruit, with needful repose, the strength required for the exertions of the morrow.

Saturday night is the bright spot in Charley's week. Then he gets his wages, which go to his mother; and then he can sit up as late as he likes, because he can get up as late as he

likes on the morrow; and because he can do both, he will go to the play if he can manage to raise the necessary sixpence. He looks upon the drama, which he calls the "drawmer," as the grandest of all our institutions, and he has very original ideas on the subject of plays and acting. He knows, as he says, lots of tragic speeches, and spouts them to Billy as they lie awake in bed, sometimes dropping off to sleep in the middle of a soliloquy. He has doubts whether the pantomime is quite legitimate, but wonders, with Billy, why it isn't played all the year round—is sure it would draw. He knows of course that *Hamlet* is "first-rate," and *Macbeth* the same; but his sympathies go with that little pig-tailed tar in the shiny hat at the Victoria, who, hitching up his canvas trousers with one hand, and shaking a short, dumpy cutlass in the other, hacks and hews his way through a whole regiment of red-coats, who surprise him in the smuggler's cave, and gets clear off, leaving half of his adversaries dead on the stage. The valiant smuggler is Charley's hero, and he admires him amazingly, never giving a thought to the why or wherefore, or suspecting for a moment that it is far more honourable to work hard, as he does, in helping to provide an honest crust for those who are dear to him, than to be the boldest smuggler that ever had a valid claim to the gallows.

THE WATERMAN.

UNDER this designation the reader will naturally look for an active young fellow, who plies a pair of oars upon the broad surface of the Thames. No such thing. If the "jolly young waterman" of a generation ago yet survive and feather his oars upon the bosom of the river—which we are inclined to doubt—it must be beyond the limits of the bridges and the range of the half-penny, penny, and two-penny steamers, which would peril the safety of his wherry and the lives of his fare. No; the jolly young waterman of the days when George the Third was king, has been effectually banished from the London river; and in his name an old waterman, not particularly jolly, has made his appearance in the London streets. He is the presiding genius of that unpleasant conglomeration of mud and mire, of decomposing straw and musty hay, of oats and chaff, of ruined and ruinous vehicles, of asthmatic and broken-kneed horse-flesh, of oscillating pendulous nose-bags, and of brown-coated unshaven cabmen, redolent of beer and tobacco and rotten-stone and candle-grease, which all together go to make up a cab-stand. Of all these ill-compounded and heterogeneous elements, the waterman is the solitary permanent item. The wind may scatter the hay, straw, and chaff; the sun may dry up the mire and mud, and a sudden shower may dissipate the drivers to the four points of the compass; but he, like a courageous general, remains firm and unmoved at his

post, and sticks to his half-dozen tubs of water, probably for the simple reason that he has nowhere else to go. It is from these tubs, each of about a gallon capacity, and from which the miserable hacks that drag the lumbering cabs over the London stones slake their burning thirst, that he derives his designation of "waterman." He is the depository of some moist species of authority over the tubs aforesaid, and he carries a key in one of his seventy-five pockets, which admits him to a pipe in a recess in the wall, where he levies unlimited contributions upon the New River Company.

In personal appearance, the waterman is quite an unique specimen, and not to be mistaken for a member of any other fraternity. To describe his costume would be of no avail. He wears no particular costume, but an assemblage of all the costumes of which he can get possession. He is so covered on and covered in with garments of every sort, that his individuality is not to be got at. He is an animated collection of coats and waistcoats and neck-ties of every conceivable colour and cut, and all, like himself, in a state of considerable dilapidation. It is doubted by some whether he really lives anywhere else than on the stand, because he is never observed to go home. He is noted for irregular hours, and for sleeping at any time in the day, or the night either, along with the nose-bags, in the insides of cabs, with his feet sometimes resting upon the pavement. In summer time he snores at his ease, through the sunny afternoons, when the cabs are standing still, upon the bench in front of the public-house, and starts into activity again by the time the evening parties demand the services of his friends the drivers, and his own.

The waterman gets his living in a very fractional way. He has no settled stipend, but receives a copper from every cabman who drives off the stand with a fare. In return for this, it his business to open the door of the vehicle, and close it after the customer has taken his seat, and while doing this he tries all he can to levy an additional contribution from the fare,

in which attempt he is for the most part successful. Sometimes it happens, when his stand is in the suburbs, that he rears a brood of chickens, which grow up under the horses' feet, and are sold for the spit, if they escape, for a sufficient length of time, from being kicked to death by the horses, run over by the wheels, or hunted and eaten by the dogs and cats of the neighbourhood. In addition to these avocations, he cleans knives, polishes boots, and scours pots for the publican, and makes himself, as it is termed, generally useful, either in the stable or the cellar.

Among his companions the cabmen, the waterman partakes of the character both of a butt and an oracle. He is always older than they—being invariably a man rather stricken in years. He is a good judge of horse-flesh, especially of that peculiar species which flourishes on a cab-stand, and knows what the "wettany sarjun" would do in such and such a case. His conversation with his companions is a kind of audible short-hand, not very intelligible to the uninitiated; and you may listen to it a long while, if you choose, without being much the wiser. He finds it to his interest to put up with their jokes, as well practical as verbal, without complaining, as he is mainly dependent upon them for his income. They treat him, however, upon the whole, with consideration, as he is virtually a watchman as well as a waterman, and frequently has the charge of the whole stand, while the drivers, who should be upon their boxes in readiness for customers, are amusing themselves round the tap-room fire, or in the skittle-ground of the adjoining public-house. In their merriment he is a very modest and submissive participator. When the festive cup goes round, it comes to him last, and he pledges the health of the cabmen in the dregs of the tankard. He pays no scot, and has no score chalked up on the landlord's slate; not that his credit is bad, so much as that his ready money is so scarce that he dares not venture on credit. He is always in good odour with the landlord of the tavern

nearest the cab-stand, because he is so obliging and ready with his good offices. By dint of his officious services he contrives to constitute himself in a manner the waste-butt of the establishment. Stale-beer and stale-bread and fleshless joints of meat become his as if by right of inheritance, and he feasts on the fat of the land—after others have done with it. He is generally a peaceable and quiet subject, with a civil word for everybody, and a supplicatory one for himself—which, by the way, he never forgets to prefer when an opportunity offers. If he meet with a repulse, it is no more than he is used to; he can retire within himself, and, in the folds of his multitudinous garments, collect his courage with the anticipation of better success next time.

It is thus that the waterman gets his living. Unfortunately, it is pretty much in the same way that the poor old fellow frequently gets his death. He has a foolish faith in the multiplicity of his wrappers, and in the altitude of his wooden clogs. He throws an extra sack or two over his shoulders in the foggy slushy days and nights of winter, and buries his hard fists in a cashiered pair of boxing gloves; and if the frost is severe, he will wind a hayband round his legs, and potter about among his icy tubs, buoyed up with a vision of yet another and another copper, in the face of a storm which sends younger and stronger men than he cowering to their firesides. Then, stern and angry winter comes at last, and seizes him by the throat and prostrates him in a moment on the cold pavement; and then a brace of his old friends hoist him into the nearest cab, and give him a gratuitous ride to the nearest hospital; and then our old friend the waterman is suddenly transformed into a decided and hopeless case of some dreadful disease with an ugly dog-latin name, come in the very nick of time for the instruction of a medical class; and then—and then—and then farewell, old waterman.

AN EXTINGUISHER.

YONDER perambulating pyramid of deal boards, labelled on its four acute-angled fronts with Messrs. Welt and Felt's puffs of Wellington boots, at 9s. 4d. a pair, is technically termed, among the initiated, an Extinguisher, doubtless from its similarity in shape to that useful domestic implement. The term is applicable in more senses than one: the machine in question is not merely like an extinguisher in shape, but also in its operation; he who puts it on, in some sort extinguishes himself—quenches the last fluttering glimmer of ambition, and resigns his being to a lot of very equivocal happiness, and one much more adapted to provoke the wit than to excite the pity of unthinking spectators. One man may regard him as a peripatetic philosopher, an ingenious combination of Diogenes and a snail, carrying his humble mansion wherever he goes, and observing mankind from the summit of his desires; another may choose to look upon him as one who has voluntarily thrust himself into a pillory for the guerdon of fourteenpence a day; a third, affecting to look up to his cloudy top from a level of fifty feet below him, may hail him as a Simeon Stylites; while a fourth shall name him Cheops, because his bones are buried within the walls of a pyramid.

In sober truth, the tenant of an extinguisher is neither philosopher, Romish saint, nor anchorite. He is rather a man doubly and trebly unfortunate, who often, from the want of

industry, the want of a profession, or the want of perseverance, capacity, or integrity, and most of all from the want of self-denial, finds his way into his wooden surtout. Other men achieve distinction through the exercise of positive virtues; he arrives at his through the sheer force of his numberless negations; the qualities which he does not possess accomplish his destiny, and degrade him to the lowest rank, as surely and inevitably as the qualities of enterprise and integrity exalt their possessors to the highest. Let us glance briefly over the history of one whom we knew in better days, and whom we lately encountered while sheltering his conical sedan, during a storm of rain, beneath the Piazza of Covent Garden Market.

Jack Rattle was the only son of a tradesman well-to-do in the world, and who drove a thriving business in a large town in the West of England. Unhappily for Jack, his father died after a short illness, just as the boy had left school, and was hesitating in the choice of a profession, having just completed his fifteenth year. By his father's will the whole of the property was equally divided between his two children, Jack and his sister. The executors found it necessary to sell the business, as the lad was too young to take it in charge. The will was proved at Doctors' Commons, and the property amounted to near £8,000. So soon as Jack was made aware that when he was of age he should come into the possession of four thousand pounds, his disinclination for business of any kind soon became apparent. He grew apace, but his pride dilated faster than his person. His father's executors, by virtue of the trust they held, articled him to a solicitor, but they could not make him learn his profession, of every detail of which he contrived to remain consummately ignorant. He aped the man while yet a boy, and, cultivating dancing and whiskers in preference to Blackstone and Coke, grew up a very graceful and handsome ignoramus, the plague of his guardians, whom he was continually pestering for supplies, and the delight of quadrille parties where he shone a star of the first magnitude.

When the last lingering year of his minority had at length taken wing, his guardians were but too glad to surrender their trust; and Jack, now his own master, and master of more than four thousand pounds besides, started off for Paris, to enjoy his liberty unrestrained.

He was absent barely three years, during which time his sister had married a substantial farmer and borne him a brace of sturdy children. How Jack employed his long sojourn in the gayest capital of Europe it is impossible to tell with certainty, though it is very easy to guess, seeing that he left the whole of his money behind him, for which he brought back in exchange a shabby, braided suit of French cut, a prodigious crop of whisker and moustache, and an indescribable jargon of gasconading and slang gallicisms, intelligible to no one beyond the clique of roués and gamblers into whose hands it was plain that he had eventually fallen, and who, pigeon as he was, had plucked him to the last feather.

It was now that he received his first lesson in that science which many are so unwilling to learn, and pay so dearly for learning—knowledge of the world. His old master, the lawyer, upon whom he sought to quarter himself as an in-door clerk, dismissed him with a rather candid explanation of five minutes' length; and his guardians, to whom he applied for a loan wherewith to establish himself in his father's business, sneered at the proposal, and asked him whether it was likely that if he could not take care of his own money he could take care of theirs? Jack trod the high ropes, and breaking away in a storm of passion, flew to the honest farmer who had married his sister, with whom he took up his abode as a guest. From a guest, honoured and cherished, accommodated with a nag, and indulged in all kinds of rural sports, he descended by degrees, as his welcome wore out, to "one of the family," then to a cumbersome inmate, always uselessly in the way, and finally to a pest whom it was indispensable to get rid of. Jack, whose perceptions were none of the most acute, would

have hung on to the last, but for the representations of his sister, who enlightened him as to the true state of the case, and who advised him to go to London, and find employment by which he could maintain himself. As she backed this advice with the offer of a loan of twenty pounds, probably at the suggestion of her husband, who would have purchased Jack's absence at ten times the amount, her proposal was accepted, and Jack, mounting the night coach, dropped from its roof one fine morning in the spring of 1838, with his fortune to make among the millions of struggling individuals all striving in pursuit of the same end.

Twice seven years have passed away since then, and Jack has *made* his fortune—made it as thoroughly as man can be said to make anything which he does not actually manufacture with his hands. Were we to trace the process through which he has arrived at the consummation of the four triangular deal boards in which he buries himself alive for the benefit of Messrs. Welt and Felt, and for the modest consideration they award him, we should find that his progress for the last fourteen years has been a series of successive failures, each of which deposited him a step lower on the social ladder; and we should find too that one and all resulted from the absence of qualities which he ought to have possessed, and which every man is bound to possess, to preserve, and to cultivate. As a clerk, his first employment, he failed from want of punctuality and attention; as a shopman, from want of politeness, and, it is to be feared, of integrity as well; as a town-traveller, from want of activity and good temper; as a cabman, from want of sobriety; as an omnibus conductor, from want of patience and civility;—and so on and on, and down and down, until circumstances, which he would never take the trouble to mould for himself, have shuffled him into his timber coil, and made him a perambulating four-sided puffing machine—a wandering variation of a bill-sticker's hoarding—a living substitute for a dead wall.

It often happens that a man serves for the moral of his own history; and thus it is with Jack Rattle. To those who know him, and it may be to those who do not, his appearance in his large-lettered garb in the public streets is suggestive of other and very different things than Wellington boots, at nine and four-pence a pair. Though but on the verge of forty, want and wretchedness have done upon him the work of years, have bowed his head and furrowed his once handsome face, in which the expression of a miserable content with a miserable lot forbids the beholder to indulge a hope that, by his own exertions at least, he will ever emancipate himself from it. Imagination sees in him a melancholy spectacle of a ruined life, a departed existence, coffined above-ground—the wandering ghost of a buried ambition—"doomed for a certain time to walk the earth" as an incarnate Puff.

BOB, THE MARKET-GROOM.

It is impossible to pay much attention to the study of the popular character, as it is so variously developed among the very lowest ranks of society, without occasionally recognising among them that force of determination and persevering energy which, when it characterises men in the higher and educated classes, leads them on to fortune and reputation. There is an order of minds who under any circumstances will act for themselves; they are the moral antitheses of those drones of society who are always waiting for something to *turn up* in their favour. The men of action have no appetite for waiting at all, and no very particular relish, perhaps, for anything that turns up. They are, in a sense, artificers of their own fortune, and they love the fruits of their own labour far better than any unearned luxuries doled out to them from the rich man's table. The observer of manhood, who has not seen this spirit exemplified in the very lowest grade of industrial life, has not thoroughly studied his subject. These remarks may serve, perhaps not inappropriately, to introduce the out-of-door history of Bob, (we do not know his patronymic,) the market-groom.

It must be eight or nine years ago since we first encountered Bob, in ——— Street, Covent Garden, in one of our early morning rambles. Who he was, or where he came from, we never knew. On his first appearance, he was a grimy, half-starved, little tatterdemalion, without a shirt, a shoe, or

a hat, and with six months' growth of matted raven hair, through the lank and thatchy locks of which a pair of vivid eyes flashed from as pallid and hungry a face as ever child of eleven years of age bared to an adverse destiny. He seemed as if just dropped from some forlorn planet into a world of strangers, amongst whom he looked wildly and eagerly around —not for favour or the relief of alms, but for work—work, and bread, though but a crust, in return. We marked his constant and earnest applications for employment of any sort, at any wage, and his utter insensibility to rebuke and rebuff, however violently and abusively bestowed. Through the mud, rain, fog, sleet, and slush of the dark winter mornings, with bare feet and unsheltered head, he toiled and moiled, and tugged and laboured, for the chance of a penny, the price of his breakfast, for which he often waited many a weary hour, hungering patiently beneath a wintry sky. Unlike his numerous congeners—the ragged tribes who frequent the market, and rove from one point to another in search of a job whenever it may offer—the boy had the sense to confine his exertions to one locality, where, in the course of a few months, his unbroken good temper and unwearying willinghood earned him a welcome, and procured him employment. From being a sort of butt upon whom the dealers expended their small wit, he grew by degrees into a favourite, and by some unaccountable means actually got into a pair of serviceable hob-nailed Bluchers before the winter was over; and having had his hair cut by a charitable barber, who did it for nothing, on condition that Bob should carry off the whole crop in his basket, so that room might be left in his shop for succeeding customers; and having then invested sixpence in a jaunty cap, cocked knowingly on one side of his head—he came out in a new character. The hungry look had vanished from his face, and given place to a merry one; and his activity, upon which there were now more demands, was greater than ever. He improved in looks, and in circumstances too, rapidly; the genial spring and

summer atmosphere of the market, and the early rising which his calling enforced, agreed with him so well, that before the gooseberries were all gone, a shirt positively sprouted out from under his new fustian waistcoat.

Bob, finding by this time that he had got a character for honesty, and feeling no doubt that he deserved it, wisely resolved to turn it to the best account. In the course of his market experience he had observed the necessity which the dealers, green-grocers, retailers, and costers were under of leaving their carts in the streets, sometimes at a great distance from the market, while they were absent negotiating their purchases. This practice, though unavoidable, was attended with risk and damage, from want of supervision, and often too from the wanton mischief or dishonesty of the urchins left in charge of the vehicles. Having duly conned the matter over in his mind, Bob all at once started in a new speculation. He abandoned his various functions of fetcher and carrier and supernumerary porter, began a canvass among all the traders frequenting his side of the market, to the whole of whom he was personally known, offering to take charge of their vehicles during their absence, and to guarantee the security of their stock, for the smallest mentionable charge per head. The tried character of the lad, and his known kindness to animals, whom he could not help instinctively fondling, soon procured him plenty of customers; and he was in a few days regularly installed in office as the custodier of the horse and ass-drawn chariots of the market.

Thus it was that Bob became groom of the market, a profession, be it observed, which he built up for himself, and in which, though he has now many imitators and rivals, he has no compeer. He is to Covent Garden, or at least to one of the many arteries branching from it, what the waterman is to the cab-stand. He may be seen before dawn all the year round busy at his vocation. No sooner does the first cart drive up, though the sun is yet an hour below the horizon, than he is on

the spot to receive the whip from the hand of the owner. He shoulders the whips as the symbol of his authority, and marches under a complete fagot of them by the time the traffic has fairly set in. When a dealer has completed his purchases, and wants to be off, all he has to do is to shout with lusty lungs, "Yo ho, Bob!" and in an instant you may see the long whip-lashes streaming horizontally through the air as Bob answers the cry and hurries towards his patron. The whips are all marked with the names of the owners, and as Bob has learned to read at the Sunday-school, and knows them pretty well from long acquaintance, but little time is lost in finding the right owner of each.

The reader is not to imagine that the subject of our sketch enjoys anything like a sinecure. If it were a sinecure, we have a suspicion that it would not suit him at all. It is something very much the contrary. In the first place, he has to exercise a constant surveillance to see that the army of donkeys, horses, and ponies do not get out of the rank and block up the way, which must be left free on either side; and this requires his frequent presence in all parts of his domain. In the next place, when fruit is ripe, it is tempting to juvenile palates, and there is a young gang of smugglers continually on the look-out for contraband pippins or unsentinelled gooseberries; against these Bob plays the part of the preventive service, and sometimes (we have seen him do it) leads them gently out of temptation by the ear. Then again, donkeys, who have, unfortunately for Bob, no moral principles, are very much given to munching one another's turnips, or the turnips of one another's masters, which is very much the same thing; and it must be confessed, that as they sometimes stand for hours together, each with his head in his neighbour's cart — the carts being well loaded with fruit or vegetables — the temptation may well be more than untaught donkeyhood can stand. Over these Bob has to keep a vigilant eye, and to teach them the virtues of abstinence and self-denial. In this task he is seen to exercise a praiseworthy

patience. Though armed with fifty whips, he is never known to beat an animal; he may be seen now and then polishing the sleek ear of a pet "moke" with the cuff of his coat, but never ill-using one. His admonitory ejaculation of "Ha! would you?" launched at the head of an offender, is sufficient to bring the most predatory beast among them to a temporary sense of honesty. From a long and intimate acquaintance with his long-eared friends, he knows well enough those upon whom he can rely, and he will locate them, if possible, accordingly. A brute, naturally unprincipled, upon whom admonition is thrown away, finds himself drawn up with his nose against the tail of a tall wagon, where, like many a biped correspondingly situated, he is virtuous from necessity; or, wanting this convenience, Bob will envelop his head in an empty nose-bag, through which he would find it a difficult matter to make a surreptitious meal upon his neighbour's cabbages. Our hero thinks no trouble too great which tends to the improved performance of his function, and the consequence is that he reaps credit, and ready money too, from performing it well.

Bob has grown in stature as years have rolled over his head: from a miserable starveling and friendless child, pinched in stomach and stunted in growth, he is transformed into a decent, well-spoken, and responsible man, known and trusted by hundreds, and dependent on no one for the comforts of life. Poor, indeed, he is—and poor, in one sense of the word, he is likely to remain. It is but little that is to be got by turning out of bed an hour or two after midnight, and playing the part of gentleman usher to a caravanserai of horses and asses, up to the hour when portly respectability sits down to coffee, eggs, breakfast bacon and the morning paper—little indeed—a handful of coppers at the most; but if competence is won by it—if independence is won by it—if a clear conscience and a contented mind are retained under it—and if a love for God's dumb creatures is gratified and cherished by it—it may be worth the doing, in spite of the sneers of the overwise.

THE BILLSTICKER.

THE subject of our present sketch is a personage of no small importance, and of that, by the way, judging by his despotic management of a coterie of small boys usually to be found at his heels, no one is more fully conscious than himself. He may be said to live in the eye of the public as much, if not more, than any other man of his day; and is, whatever pretenders may choose to think, or cavillers to say to the contrary, essentially a public character. He is a literary man in a sense at once the most literal and extensive, and he caters for the major part of the population almost the only literature that they ever peruse. He is a publisher to boot, whose varied and voluminous works, unscathed by criticism, are read by all the world, and go through no end of editions. It is an axiom of somebody's—whose, we forget just now—that most men look at the world, and all things in it, through the medium of their own profession. If that be the case; how does the billsticker regard it? what tricks does his fancy play him? what are the myths ever revolving before his imagination? Is there a golden age looming in the distant future of his hopes? a good time coming, when every wall and hoarding, every house-front, window-shutter, and now interdicted inclosure —from the "palaces of crowned kings," down to the humblest "habitations of all things that dwell"—shall be patent to his paste-brush, open as charity to his broadsheet, and

when he shall no longer be compelled to trudge beneath his heavy load in all weathers, through weary miles of mud and rain, in search of a sanctuary where the art and mystery of his calling is not forbidden? When he sleeps at peace, after the labours of the day, does he dream of vast timber-hoards in endless perspective, without a single broadside on their virgin surfaces, all waiting to receive, in a shower of double-royal posters, the contributions of the press? And if, after supping upon apocryphal pork-sausages, he should happen to have the nightmare, does the vampire visage of the fiend bestriding the paste-pot which sits so heavily on his chest, bear on its lurid forehead the dreadful inscription, or does it shriek in his horror-stricken ears the terrible accents: "Billstickers, beware?"

We cannot respond to these interrogatories. Unfortunately, we have not the privilege of his bosom confidences, and have been obliged to derive what knowledge we possess with regard to him from careful observation, and some small application of that inductive system of philosophy recommended by Bacon, to which the world owes so much, and by means of which what must be is predicated from what is. We have seen the billsticker under all the mutations of his humanity: in busy times, when his services were well paid, and in slack times, when placards grew mouldy on their hoardings for want of decent burial; at election times, when Whig, Tory, and Radical competed for his patronage; and in times of general distress, when the auctioneer nearly alone monopolised his labours. We have seen him at early morn, papering the gable-end of a house forty feet aloft; and at dusty—not dewy—eve, with the stealthiness of an Italian pasquinader, planting quack-doctor puffs breast-high upon forbidden ground. We have seen him, armed with ladder and peel—which, be it known, is a pole with a cross-bar on the top of it—prepared to fasten his proclamations as high as the chimney-tops; or with paste-pot and hand-bills alone, making a less ambitious

round of professional calls upon his patients—the dead-walls. There is one singularity in his profession which is a mystery to us; we allude to the fact, which we daresay the reader has himself observed, that the billsticker invariably pastes over his bills on both sides—that, having stuck them to the wall or the hoarding, he is never content with that, but incontinently gives them a coat of paste on the outer and printed side as well. This, which appears to us a sheer work of supererogation, is perhaps mysteriously connected with some important element in the process, without which it would be incomplete; but we confess we cannot fathom it, and must leave it to future investigators to explain.

If the billsticker has puzzled us, we have had the satisfaction of seeing him puzzled in his turn, and that more than once. He is usually sagacious enough in his way, and, as much as most men, a dab at his trade, in the prosecution of which anything like hesitation on his part is the last thing to be observed. But we *have* seen him charged with announcements in Hebrew, addressed to our friends the sons of Israel, and seriously perplexed, while conning the square letters, as to which end of the poster had the most right to stand uppermost on the wall; and we have known him, when the spectators couldn't help him to a conclusion, to solve the problem in a practical way, by placing a couple of copies side by side, one on its head, the other on its feet, in accordance, it may be supposed, with the prudent maxim, that it is better to lose a part than to risk the whole. Some years ago, too, we beheld him struggling on a very windy day in the flapping folds of a monster-sheet, upon which were printed the two words, in letters a foot long each, "WHERE'S ELIZA?" and nothing more. *Who* Eliza was he could not inform us, and he shook his shaggy head in a way sufficiently ominous when we asked for the information. It was evidently a poser, as well for him as for us; and it is a remarkable event in the annals of billsticking, that that pertinent inquiry and public interroga-

tion has remained unanswered up to the present moment. We should like to know *who* Eliza was, in order that we might become more interested in her whereabouts; but after indulging in painful speculations on the subject, we can come to no other conclusion than one which may be nothing more than conjecture after all. It *may* be—we cannot vouch for it—but it may be that Eliza is the Christian name of some modern Thisbe unhappily lost in the wilderness of this great Babylon, for whose restoration her love-lorn and bewildered Pyramus distractedly appeals to London Wall through the medium of the billsticker.

Seen in a high wind, the London billsticker presents a picturesque appearance: his costume, though in accordance with no recognised fashion, from being rather frayed and fragmentary, exhibits those characteristic points which the artist loves to sketch; and being, when on his rounds, ponderously loaded around the loins with good stowage of damp paper and printers' ink, he may be compared, as he struggles sturdily forwards "in the eye of the blast," along the soaking street, to one of those heavy Dutch bottoms beating down Channel against a head-wind, which we see on a gusty day from the shore of Kent. Sometimes the weather is too much for him, and then, like the good Vrow Vanderdunk, he is obliged to run into the nearest port until the storm has blown over. For mere rain he cares nothing—perhaps rather likes it; it liquidates his paste, and clears the footpath of idlers, who are apt to discommode him in his operations, and who, in fine weather, follow him from board to board with the laudable desire of reaping the first-fruits which he disseminates from the tree of knowledge. He is the centre of attraction to a peculiar do-nothing class, and sometimes is followed at a cautious distance by an eccentric satellite, who seems to derive no end of amusement by supplementing his labours in a singular way. This genius is one of the small boys before alluded to, who, like the sparrows in London streets, are here, there, and

everywhere to be met with. He possesses two accomplishments which he is desirous that the whole world should witness and applaud, and he makes our friend of the paste-pot the medium of the glorification which he covets and enjoys. Dogging him to a hoarding or a wall, no sooner has the billsticker posted a broadside within his reach, and vanished round the corner, than up steps Master Tommy Toes, carefully pulls it down while the paste is wet, and sticks it up again wrong end upwards; then, pitching himself suddenly on his hands, and quivering his bare heels aloft in the air, he reads the whole proclamation through in a loud and sonorous voice, for the benefit of all and sundry who may choose to listen. If he gets a copper for the performance, so much the better; if you throw him one, he puts it in his mouth, as the most convenient pocket at hand; but copper or no copper, he jumps head upwards again when his feat is accomplished, and looks round him with an air of triumph, as much as to say: "Let me see you do that, if you can!" It has been suggested to us, that this performance of Master Tommy's is but one of the multitudinous modifications of the puff-system, resorted to by some speculative tradesman, whose agent the boy is, to draw attention to his announcements; but seeing that when the policeman appears, Toes incontinently takes to his heels—that he has no shoes, no hat, no shirt, and but a shred of a jacket, nothing, in short, to boast of but the faculties of standing upon his head and reading large print—we reject the suspicion as groundless, and unworthy of the respectabilities of trade.

It is not uninteresting to glance at the educational effect of the billsticker's labours upon the mass of the London population. It is well known that among the very lowest order of society, the number of adults who can read fluently is always much greater on the average of the population in large towns, and in the metropolis especially, than it is in rural hamlets and villages. This is not owing to the difference in early edu-

cation, but to the difference of association in after-life. The child of the rustic labourer is as well taught—we are inclined to think better taught—than the children of the poor born in great cities. But of the numbers who learn to read, of the purely agricultural class, a very large proportion forget the acquirement before they grow up to be men—that is, they forget it so far as to make reading a difficulty and not a pleasure; and hence it is that the taste for and the habit of reading is so greatly less common with field-labourers than with the corresponding class in towns and cities. Now, it strikes us that the billsticker is in no small degree at the bottom of this difference. His handiwork stares the public in the face, let them turn which way they will; and it is a sheer impossibility for a lad who has once learned the art of reading, to lose it in London, unless he be both wilfully blind and destitute of human curiosity. To thousands and tens of thousands, the placarded walls and hoardings of the city are the only school of instruction open to them, whence they obtain all the knowledge they possess of that section of the world and society which does not lie patent to their personal observation. It is thence they derive their estimate of the different celebrities—in commerce, in literature, and in art, of the time in which they live, and are enabled to become in some measure acquainted with the progress of the age. Perhaps few men, even among the best educated, could be found who would willingly let drop the knowledge they have gained, although without intending it, from this gratuitous source.

Thus, then, the billsticker is a public benefactor, and, like any man who honestly pursues an honest trade, profits others in profiting himself. But, like all responsible public functionaries, he is open to the shafts of slander—liable to the breath of detraction. There are not wanting men of no mark, fellows never elevated to the paste-pot and peel, who have been heard to demand sarcastically, what proportion the number of posters which he sticks against the wall bears to

the number delivered to him from the printer—what is the precise per-centage which satisfies a billsticker's conscience—and what the exact amount of the overplus which he sells for waste paper. Let us hope that these dark and ugly insinuations are but the offspring of mere malevolence and envy, having no real foundation in the practices of the profession. It is true we have known parties so mistrustful on this score, as to turn their own billstickers upon occasion, especially at times when parish politics ran high, and paper-war was mercilessly waged upon the walls; but we cannot conscientiously recommend the system of "every man his own billsticker," inasmuch as we have noticed, times without number, that bills thus unprofessionally stuck are extremely liable to become prematurely overlaid when the legitimate operator comes upon his round. Further, it may chance that an amateur billsticker may get himself into trouble, through ignorance of details with which the regular professional is intimately acquainted. Though the majority of hoardings—if bill-stickable at all—are free to all paste-pots, that is by no means the case with them all. Many which are of long standing are private property, and are let in compartments to the members of the profession, who of course tolerate no trespassers upon their domains, and would inflict the penalties of invasion upon any one caught in the act of violating their privileges. To such irregular aspirants to this honourable profession we commend the admonition, familiar to us on brick-walls and park-enclosures—"STICK NO BILLS."

THE BEREAVED TROMBONE.

I HAVE been for the last dozen years in the habit of walking daily to office in one direction, through a line of route reaching from a northerly suburb to the heart of the city, and back again in the evening, or late at night, as it might happen, by the self-same track. During that period, without asking a single question, or receiving a tittle of verbal information, I have learned the personal and domestic histories of many individuals and families, as well as the rise and management, and the consequent results and issues of a host of speculations, commercial and other, which have had their progress and consummation within the sphere of my continued remark. I may chronicle some of these histories when the humour seizes me—not now. One dilapidated figure, familiar to my morning vision, which he greeted two or three times a week for the last ten years, has disappeared for ever, and I dedicate this brief page to his remembrance. For the last twelve weary months he has figured periodically in the vicinity of —— Square, as a butt—a walking target for the stray shafts of the vagabond wit of a gaping and jibing crowd; and, indeed, a stranger to his history might well have been excused for joining in the laugh of the multitude. There is, however, too often food for melancholy in the forms which excite our mirth. Smiles and sadness not unfrequently live together; and some of the vicissitudes incidental to humanity at times

present themselves to view under such strange and anomalous aspects, that whether we ought to laugh or to weep, to banter or to sympathise, it is next to impossible to tell.

The defunct subject of this short memorial wandered for the last year of his life as a solo player on the trombone. Such a performance was unique in the history of street minstrelsy, and though anything but vivacious in itself, was the cause of infinite vivacity in others. The very first intonations from his dreary tube were a signal for a general gathering of the idling youngsters of the neighbourhood, amongst whom, in ragged but majestic altitude, stood the forlorn performer, filling the air with the sepulchral tones of his instrument. His dismal, dolorous, and almost denunciatory strain, drew forth ironical cheers and bravos from his grinning audience; and their persecuting demands for "Paddy Carey," or "Rory O'Moore," were answered by a deep-toned wail from the sonorous brass, giving mournful utterance to emotions far different from theirs. To me, and perhaps to others to whom the poor fellow's history was known, there was little cause for mirth in the spectacle he presented. Let the reader judge.

It is now full ten years ago that, as I drew near —— Square, one fine spring morning on my way to business, I heard, for the first time, the exhilarating strains of a brass band; the instruments were delicately voiced, and harmonised to a degree of perfection not too common among out-of-door practitioners. My ear, not unused to the pleasing intricacies of harmony, apprised me that a quintett was going forward, composed of two cornets-à-piston, a piccola flute, a French horn, and a trombone. The strain was new, at least to me, and of a somewhat wild and eccentric character. Upon coming up with the band, I beheld five tall, erect, and soldier-looking figures, "bearded like the pard," and with some remaining indications of military costume yet visible in their garb. I set them down for Poles, and learned afterwards that my conjecture was the true one. They were all men of middle age;

and from the admirable unity and precision of their performance, it was plain that they had even then been long associated together. For two years I enjoyed at regular intervals, in my morning walks, the delightful solace of their harmonious utterances—and have been conscious more than once, of marching *à pas de soldat*, under the influence of the spirit-stirring sounds, to the drudgery of labour, as though there were a heroism (who says there is not?) in facing it manfully. At the commencement of the third year, I missed one of the cornets-à-piston; and knew within a month after, by the appearance of a ligature of black crape, displayed not upon the heads, but upon the left arms of the survivors, that he had blown his last blast, and finally dissolved partnership with his brethren.

Still quartetts are delightful; and though that peculiar and piquant undercurrent of accompaniment which makes a well-played quintett such a *bonne-bouche* to the amateur was ever afterwards wanting, yet was their performance perfect of its kind, and left no cause for cavil, however much there might have been for regret. But the grim tyrant seldom contents himself with a single victim; and in something more than a year after there was another void in the harmony—the French horn had gently breathed his own requiem, and reduced the band to a trio. This was a far worse loss than the first, and one that completely altered the character of their minstrelsy. They had fallen from their high estate, and were compelled to take new ground and less pretentious standing. They abandoned almost entirely—one may conceive with what regret—their own cherished national harmonies, and took up with the popular music of the metropolis—the current and ephemeral airs of the day. To these, however, they added a new charm by the exquisite precision of their execution, and an agreeable spice of foreign accentuation, which they naturally imparted to our matter-of-fact musical phraseology. They became popular favourites, and for several years went

their accustomed rounds, everywhere rewarded with the commendations and coins of the crowd. Their imperturbable gravity and dignity of demeanour was a pleasant set-off to their rollicking version of some of the pet melodies of the mob, and contributed not a little to procure them a degree of favour and prosperity perhaps greater than they had ever previously enjoyed. They never forsook their old haunts, and I heard them regularly on the usual days, not, certainly, with the same delight as at first, yet often with a feeling of gratified surprise that so much grace could be imparted to airs which the "Aminadabs that grind the music-boxes" in the streets of London had so mercilessly and so successfully conspired, first to murder and then to mutilate.

Time wore on; year after year the gray and grizzled triumvirate trod their daily rounds in all weathers, arousing the liberality of their patrons with the merry music of the hour. Three, four, five years passed away—five harmonious years; and then death snatched the second cornet in the midst of his strain, and dashed him to the earth with a semibreve on his lips—lips condemned to be mute for evermore. The poor fellow was seized with the cholera while in the very heart of a melody, and had departed to the silent land almost before its echoes had died away. Whatever was the grief of the remaining pair, like true veterans as they were, they gave no evidence of it to the world. As they would have done on the battle-field, they did now—closed up their little rank, and confronted the enemy with the force that was yet remaining. But it was a sad spectacle, and, what was worse for them, it was but sorry music they made. With piccola and trombone, the two extremes of harmony, what indeed could be done? Orpheus and Apollo themselves would have made a failure of it. It was the harmonic tree with only root and foliage—the trunk and branches all swept away; or a dinner of soup and pudding, the intermediate dishes being wanting; or the play of "Hamlet" with none but the prating Polonius and the

Ghost for *dramatis personæ*. In short, it wouldn't do; and the poor fellows soon found it out. They fell into neglect and poverty, and save among those who dwelt in the line of their regular beat, who now gave from sympathy what they had once bestowed from gratification, they met with but spare encouragement. It could not last long. Whether the piccola had too much to do, and sunk overborne by the responsibility of the various parts he represented, or whether he blew himself out in a fit of sheer mortification, I cannot pretend to say. True it is, however, that he also, in a few short months, disappeared from the scene, and the bereaved trombone was left to wander alone among the haunts of his old companions.

For twelve months, as I have already said, had he thus wandered, growling from his dismal instrument a monotonous requiem to the manes of his departed brethren. I have reason for believing, that at the decease of his last friend he forsook the light and frivolous music which circumstances had compelled them to administer to the mob, and returned to the wilder and grander themes of his country and his youth; but as it requires an experienced ear to tell the business a man is after who plays a solo on a trombone, I cannot pretend to certainty on that point. He never condescended to take the least notice of the crowd of scapegrace idlers who stood around, mimicking his motions, and raising discordant groans in rivalry of his tones. He played on with an air of abstracted dignity; and one might have thought that, instead of the jibes and jeers of the blackguard mob, he heard nothing but the rich instrumental accompaniments of his buried companions, and that memory reproduced in full force to his inner sense the complete and magnificent harmonies in all their thrilling and soul-stirring eloquence, as they rung through the same echoes in the years past and gone. He persevered to the last in treading the same ground that was trod by his brethren: it was all that was left to him of them and of their past lives. He had indeed experienced the

hardest fate of the whole five. He was the flitting ghost of the buried band—a melancholy memorial of extinct harmonies. There was a painful discrepancy between his history and his action: the sudden and fierce elongation of his brazen tube, as he shot it violently forth to double the octave at the penultimate note of his wailing stave, but ill accorded with the mournful recollections of which he was the solitary monument. There was a visible discord between his griefs and his gestures, his woes and his utterances of them, which transformed the very fount of melancholy into an argument for mirth. From a position so painfully equivocal, I, for one, can rejoice that he has at length been beckoned away. There is none to mourn his departure, and, beyond this brief testimony, no record that he ever was. *Requiescat!*

THE CITY TOLL-MAN.

It is a long while since the toll-gates, which once barricaded the approaches to the city of London proper, finally disappeared from the public ways. The localities, where they once barred the road to the traveller who used any other means of locomotion than those with which he was naturally provided, are now not easily identified. It is probable, however, that the toll-gates stood very near the spots where were the gates of the ancient city when London was a walled capital. If so, their sites would be indicated, though with no very great precision, by the situation on the map of Aldgate, Aldersgate, Bishopsgate, etc., etc., in former times the gates of the old surrounding fortification. But city walls and gates, and toll-bars too, have all been swept away by the rushing stream of commerce; yet though the material obstacles have vanished long ago, the pecuniary one remains. Vested interests, stronger than stone walls, endure in full vigour when these have crumbled to decay; and from this cause it is that, though the toll-man has been long ago turned out of house and home, he is not yet turned out of office, but continues to levy his exactions after he has been deprived of all semblance of authority, and of all show of right to the tax to which he lays claim.

The houseless and unsheltered functionary, who at the present day represents the corporation of London in their

capacity of highway tax-gatherers, is a very forlorn-looking individual, who has to do battle for his levies, occasionally at a disadvantage, with any man who chooses to play the recusant; and, to say the truth, his adversaries are by no means few. He is a man evidently born to contend with opposition, and to get the better of it. He has in his time rubbed shoulders with so many discomforts, that it is a question whether he would feel at home without them. He is a weather-worn subject, somewhat wiry-faced and hard-featured, and with a figure thin enough almost to find shelter to leeward of a gas-lamp, and active enough to run down a fast-trotting horse in less time than it would take to saddle him. His occupation is no sinecure; he has to be thoroughly awake every day and all day long. Homer may nod, but not he; unless he choose to pay for it by the loss of income. His whole career in office is a continuous and praiseworthy example of "the pursuit of *halfpence* under difficulties." In this pursuit he is constantly baffled, but then he is as constantly successful. If half of his unwilling vassals elude him, the other half pay him the hard cash; so that if he gets a grievance one minute, he gathers compensation the next. He is liable to be cheated every hour, and undergoes that penalty many times a day; but he has not time to grumble, and, more than that, does not think of grumbling, but looks the sharper after the next comer.

His occupation has taught him some practical philosophy. He knows the value of good temper and the folly of resentments. He is a civil fellow in the main, and will answer your questions readily enough; but you must not expect him to look you in the face: his eyes are ever on the highway, and if he shoots off like a rocket in the middle of a response, it is because he has a reason for it—at least in perspective. Sometimes, when the day has been unproductive, he will avenge the delinquency of one defaulter by the persecution of another—hunting him down with great pertinacity, and following him from street to street, leaving the way clear

meanwhile to all who may come. This is an imprudence, however, of which he is seldom guilty, because it is one which brings its immediate penalty.

The reader who would like to catch a glimpse of this active subject must look for him in some one of the thoroughfares of commerce, just at the point which marks the limits of the corporation domains. If he have a map of London in which the city proper is marked by a different colour, he will see at a glance all the inlets and outlets which have to be guarded and taxed by the toll-man. Thus there is one at Holborn-hill, whose occupation can be no sinecure, seeing that he has to do the duty of three imaginary five-barred gates, placed, one at Shoe-lane, one at Farringdon-street, and one at Snow-hill. There is another pluralist, who stands at the west-end of Fleet-street, keeping one eye constantly on Temple-bar and another on Chancery-lane. They are all authorised and enjoined to collect twopence from the drivers of all vehicles, not belonging to freemen of London, bringing goods into the city. The principal city toll-man is, or was, a speculating Jew, who rents the whole of the tolls from the corporation. He supplies his assistants with tickets, which, like turnpike tickets elsewhere, are delivered to the drivers who pay the toll. Whether he pays his inferiors by stated salaries, or sells them the tickets at a discount, we are not in a condition to certify; but judging from the indefatigable efforts of some of them in the prosecution of their profession—seeing how recklessly they dash into the torrent of rushing vehicles, heedless of horses' hoofs and rattling wheels, after a driver who turns a deaf ear to their challenge—we are inclined to suspect that they have in some way or other a personal interest in the capture of every identical twopence. Be this as it may, the toll-man evidently reaps no great emolument from his profession, which is far more wearisome and laborious than it is profitable. Upon his first appointment, he is generally seen gaping about him in a state of anxious bewilderment, half

uncertain upon whom to levy his unwelcome tax. By the time that he has got the freemen's carts by heart, and learned to distinguish his lawful victims, he has usually made the discovery that his vocation is intolerably exacting, and not to be endured. We never knew one of them stand the ordeal many years. A man who would get through such a function well is generally deserving of something better; and anything is better than a perpetual tramp out-of-doors in all weathers after flying twopences, in which he has but the merest fractional interest, if he have any at all. So it comes to pass that he looks out for repose in some other calling; and, mounted on the step of an omnibus as a conductor, or stuck into a cabin reared in the mud of the Thames as pay-taker for a penny steamer, he congratulates himself that he no longer runs himself out of breath after the corporation coppers.

It is not easy to come at the origin of these city tolls. There is, however, a charter granted to the mayor and citizens of London by Henry IV., which throws some light upon the subject. This charter was bestowed in return for the loyal assistance they rendered to the king in the matter of the conspiracy and rebellion in which his throne and life were attempted, in the first year of his reign, by the Abbot of Westminster, the Dukes of Albemarle, Surrey, and Exeter, the Earls of Gloucester and Salisbury, the Bishop of Carlisle, and Sir Thomas Blount. The conspiracy was discovered by accident, and the rebellion in which it prematurely exploded was quelled by the promptitude of the mayor of London, who supplied Henry with six thousand citizens completely armed. These were soon increased, by volunteers from the neighbourhood, to the number of twenty thousand. The rebel army was overthrown, and their leaders soon after taken and executed. The charter, which bears date the 25th May, 1399, confers, among other privileges, upon "the said citizens, their heirs and successors, the custody as well of the gates of Newgate and Ludgate as all other the gates and pos-

terns of the same city." The charter, however, does not make mention of the sums to be levied as tolls at the said gates and posterns; and it would be absurd to suppose that there is any prescriptive right so ancient as the charter for subjecting each vehicle to the charge of twopence—a sum which in those days would have purchased a joint of meat.

That those tolls have been often the pretence for fraudulent exactions we may gather from the following record, preserved in the city memorials:—In the year 1743, one Anthony Wright brought an action against the lessee of one of the gates, who by his plea insisted on a prescriptive right to receive twopence for the passage of each cart laden with goods and merchandise amounting to the weight of one ton and upwards. It appeared, however, by the evidence, that the usage had been to take a penny only for a cart with two horses, however heavily laden; and a verdict was given for the plaintiff against the lessee.

We conceive the time is not far distant when the good sense of the corporation of London will lead to the final abolition of the city tolls, which, besides being a nuisance, must operate in some degree against the interests of commerce, which it is to their especial advantage to promote.

"AN HONEST PENNY."

It is interesting to remark the various shifts and contrivances, the resorts of a very humble species of ingenuity, to which some of the right-minded poor by whom we are surrounded have recourse, in order to procure what they proudly and independently term "an honest penny." It is gratifying to know that there is a very large section of the lowest ranks to whom the feeling of dependence upon others and the practices of dishonesty are equally hateful and repugnant; and it is impossible not to sympathise with the persevering endeavours of many of this class whom society seems, from some accident or other, to have pushed aside from the beaten paths of labour and its deserved emoluments; and who are left to make their way in the world in the strict and literal sense of the term—seeing that they have first to invent a calling before they can pursue it. How much physical energy and good moral determination some of them bring to bear upon this praiseworthy undertaking, the following brief sketches, drawn from the life, may assist in showing.

THE IRISH MACHINE.

Terence O'Donough is an Irishman whom a fortunate fate has united to an English wife. When I first knew Terry he was in the enviable position of a hanger-on at the underground

warehouse of a small printing-office, where two or three minor monthly publications were rolled off from a machine in a cellar, the motive-power of which was supplied by a steam-engine in an adjoining factory. Terry's whole fortune consisted in his wife, who plied as a basket-woman in Covent Garden, and his own broad back, which he carried steadily under the pressure of three hundred weight; to which might be added a temper insensible to provocation, and an appetite which, owing to "his riverence, Father Matthew," who had cured him of whisky-drinking, was a match for anything eatable under the sun. Terry's wife, whom he always addressed as "me darlint," was in every respect the "dacent ooman" he was fond of calling her; and she was not a little proud of her Herculean spouse, as anybody might see who observed her watching him as he devoured the monstrous boiling of potatoes which she brought him regularly at one o'clock, and which, with a draught of water from the pump in the court-yard, constituted his unvarying dinner. I question if the good woman herself lived upon anything better: it was Terry's boast that he had made her, like himself, a "taytotalman intirely," and that "iver since, wi' the blessin' of iven, they hadn't wanted for nothin' at all at all." Terry had no regular engagement; his earnings were limited to fetchings and carryings, and running of errands; and when he had nothing to do he had nothing to receive. His average receipts were rather under than over a pound a month; and his wife, according to his own account, which I believe was the true one, earned about half as much; but she made his home comfortable to him, kept his little garret as "clane as the blue sky;" and if Terry had any wish in the world, you may be sure the image of his wife was shut up in the centre of it.

And, to tell the truth, Terry had his wishes; and they were, like those of all honest hard workers—for constant employment and a larger income. How to bring about their realisation was the question. An untaught Irishman, bred in

the bogs of Connaught, without education and without a calling, what could he do to improve his condition? There was no human rival whom he could supplant by superior qualifications. Even the little printer's devils, who galloped up and down stairs, and ran about the warehouse, had all "got the larnin', and could rade a printed book out and out," while he did not know "sorrow a letther." "'Tisn't the larnin' will do my business anyhow," said he to himself. "Bedad, if I was but a stame-ingin, it's a pound a week they'd be afther givin' me. Arrah now! that's what I call a diskivery. Sure I'll be the stame-ingin, and do it half-price, if the masther will ounly hear rayson!" So Terry watched his opportunity, and one day when the steam ran short, as it invariably did on the Saturday, he boldly volunteered to supersede the steam-engine, "if the masther would put a handle to the mill," and drive it clean through the week for a less sum than he paid to the proprietor of the steam. Terry's proposition was at first laughed at as absurd, as the power required was considered far too great for one man to supply continuously. Repeated defalcations, however, on the part of Terry's rival, the steam-engine, at length induced the printer to listen to his offer. A handle was fitted to the machine, and Terry was offered half-a-crown a day for keeping it going. The experiment succeeded admirably. The contest between flesh and blood, bones and sinews, on the one side, and cast-iron on the other, was for once decided in favour of the former. The snorting, fire-eating rival was cashiered, and sent about his proper business; and from that day to this the arms of Terence O'Donough, with some occasional assistance from his wife, have supplied the motive-power to the printing-machine in —— Court. From long practice, Terry now makes comparatively light work of his ponderous task. During the hot summer weather his wife makes her appearance in the afternoon, and laying hold of the same handle, proves herself a worthy helpmate to her toiling spouse. More than once have I seen Terry fast asleep on the

floor, after working half the night, while his wife, grinding away, kept the concern going at the accustomed pace. The steam-proprietor is the only loser by the bargain; Terry's employer saves 20 per cent. by the exchange; Terry himself has trebled his earnings; and both he and his wife are confidently looking forward to the accumulation of sufficient capital for a start in the "general line," including "murphies and black-diamonds," which is to lead them onwards and upwards to respectability and fortune.

RUNNING PORTERS.

Returning lately from a visit to the Principality, I arrived by the Great Western Railway at the Paddington terminus. Throwing my portmanteau on the top of an omnibus bound for the Bank, I mounted myself by the side of it, and in a few minutes we were *en route* for the city. We had not yet entered upon the New Road ere I became aware that the omnibus, which was crowned with luggage, was accompanied on its journey by no less than six young lads, the eldest not above seventeen, who, running at the side or in the rear of the vehicle, kept up with it the whole way. I noticed that if one of them caught my eye, he made a motion of touching his hat —though not a semblance of a hat or of a shoe either was to be found among the whole party—and executed a kind of shambling bow, which, being performed at the speed of six or seven miles an hour, appeared a rather comic species of politeness. I asked the driver the meaning of this curious *cortège*. "Them poor young 'uns, sir," said he, "is arnin' what I calls a reg'lar hard penny. They are a-lookin' out arter the luggage; and because they runs it down all the way from the railway, they thinks they got a right to the porterage. When we drops a passenger and a portmanteau together you'll see the move. The fust man (they goes in reg'lar turns) will shoulder the luggage, and pocket the browns for carrin' of it

home. He as has the last turn will have to run perhaps all the way to the Bank—a good four mile the way we go. They gits what they can, and takes their chance whatever it is. Sometimes they're done altogether. A boy may foller the 'bus all the way on the hunt arter a gentleman's luggage, and never git it at last—'cause why, d'ye see, a cab may take it out of his mouth, or a kind-hearted swell may think that a chap as will run four miles arter a trunk, is perhaps likely to bolt with it when he's got it. 'Tis all a chance. I wish 'em better luck, that's all." "A hard penny indeed," thought I; "and a proof that these poor, ragged vagabonds are willing at any rate to get one honestly, if they can."

The first passenger with luggage got out at Tottenham Court Road; his baggage was hauled from the roof and lifted upon the shoulders of one of our running attendants by the conductor, who seemed to look upon the ceremony as a matter of course. Away marched the little bare-legged Atlas at the heels of the passenger towards the Hampstead Road, and the omnibus proceeded on its route accompanied by the remaining five. The next stoppage was at Euston Square; and the porterage, being only from the omnibus to the North-Western Railway station, was but a twopenny job. At King's Cross we discharged another passenger, and lost another ragged attendant. At the Angel, Islington, two more disappeared; and the vehicle, on the roof of which my own was the only remaining luggage, proceeded onwards to the Bank. Onward at its side, with bare feet padding the dusty road, now at the rate of nearly eight miles an hour, came a flaxen-headed, country lad of fourteen, now and then scanning my face with eager glances, and pulling an obeisance at his straggling locks as they fluttered in the wind. When at length we stopped at the Bank, the little fellow had to fight for the possession of the portmanteau, which he did with a vigour almost amounting to desperation, with a half-drunken porter of forty, who was standing on the look-out. Finding himself likely to be

worsted in the contest, he appealed to me with a look which a flint could not have resisted, and I felt myself compelled to interfere to procure him the job. He volunteered to carry the object of contention to Paternoster Row for 4d., after having run at least four miles in a broiling sun to make sure of the commission. He kept close to my side, as though fearful of incurring suspicion, either by going too fast or by lagging behind, and civilly bore the burden upstairs to the second landing before holding out his hand for payment. In answer to my questions, he told me that he should immediately start back again by the shortest cut to Paddington, there being no chance of a job by the return journey. He said he could get back in forty-five minutes in a direct line without much running, and that they could do three journeys a day. A good day was worth 1s. 3d. or 1s. 4d., a bad one 8d. or 9d. He thought he made about 5s. a week out of it, but it was very hard work, and his victuals cost him all he got, except 6d. for lodging. He added that it would never do to run in shoes or boots—the gains would all go in leather: "the sole of a shoe wears out in no time when a boy's a runnin' all day long, while the sole of a fellar's foot only gits the thicker for it." His time was too fully occupied to allow of much questioning; and having received his coin, he was off westward like a shot, to rejoin his comrades at the railway terminus.

These poor fellows work in bands, and find their security in sticking closely to each other. It is only when one is left alone at the end of a journey that a stationary porter has a chance against them. Together they would infallibly chase away any interloper who should presume to attempt to bag the game which they had conjointly hunted down. There is no doubt that they rely a great deal, as they have reason to do, upon the sympathy of the passengers, some of whom find no small amusement in the race so pertinaciously maintained for the chance of a trifling reward. I am not sorry to observe that since the increase of employment for all classes which has

arisen from our growing commercial prosperity, their numbers have been materially thinned. They have been in some sort replaced by numerous gangs of country-bred urchins, who make a trade of following the suburban omnibuses, and tumbling heels-over-head, or "wheeling" for a hundred yards together on outstretched hands and feet, after the manner of the gipsy broods, who, in times gone by, swarmed in the track of the old stage-coaches, cutting capers for the halfpence of the outsiders—an occupation that will most assuredly cease to be remunerative when its novelty to the Londoner has died away.

THE DONKEY COMMISSARIAT.

Bob Rudge is the son of a "navvie" employed on the Great Northern Railway. His father's fifteen shillings a week has been made to undergo a very considerable stretching in order to make it sufficient for the wants of eight young children, of whom Bob is the eldest, and he not yet sixteen. The mother has too much to do with her little troop of half-naked rebels to make any further attempt at industry than is manifested to the passers-by in the appearance of a small ginger-bread and apple stall in front of the blackened brick cottage in Maiden Lane. If the poor woman manages by her desultory traffic to pay the rent of the little domicile, she thinks herself well off. The number of undeniably good appetites beneath Mr. Rudge's small roof has been long a source of perplexity to the honest man, and all of them would certainly have been reduced to occasional very short commons if Bob had not, like a dutiful son, come to the rescue. Maiden Lane and its adjoining purlieus and precincts, it should be known, are the El Dorado, the unbought paradise, of hungry donkeys. There and thereabouts are numberless small patches of unenclosed grass, half lumbered with bricks and building materials, and destined to be built upon at no very distant

date. These are plentifully pastured by asses too poorly owncred to boast of private lodgings, who browse patiently among the broken bricks and rubbish, and pick up a gratuitous livelihood, being turned out of the shafts and left to shift for themselves whenever relieved from duty. Man is ever the child of circumstances, and generally derives his knowledge, if indeed he gets any worth having, from his personal surroundings. Little Bob Rudge, like the rest of us, caught up his experience from the lessons of his daily life. He was nurtured and bred among donkeys, and from the long habit of observing their predilections and propensities, has at last struck out a business for himself, enabling him to relieve his parents of the burden of his maintenance, and further, to render valuable co-operation towards that of the family.

All round the suburbs of London, girding the metropolis in every direction, are miles upon miles of open sewers and drains. The pedestrian who diverges from the beaten track is often only prevented from walking into them by the kindly information of his olfactory nerves: they are carried by numerous culverts under the New River in the north, and under the roads and railways in the east and south; the aristocratic nostrils of the west have voted them a nuisance, and there they abound in less profusion; but everywhere their odours ascend and flavour the country air which the retired citizen imagines he is inhaling in all its purity. But the poison of one man is the meat of another, and this interminable source of disease and death little Bob Rudge has made the foundation of his traffic. The banks of these endless ditches and drains are everywhere covered with a rank and luxurious vegetation, chiefly consisting of a gigantic species of succulent grass rising on long reedy stems, which is to a donkey what turtle-soup is to an alderman. This Master Bob collects and sells by the sackful to the owners of asses; not to the poverty-stricken proprietors of the squatting herds in his own immediate neighbourhood, but to the thriving owners of the lively brutes

who on Hampstead Heath, and other such places of fashionable resort, amble flauntingly in milk-white drapery beneath the soft side-saddles of the frolic fair, or plod quietly along, guided by the feeble hand of the consumptive invalid.

Bob's profession is anything but a sinecure. He began by being his own beast of burden. I met him two years ago, armed with a short sickle and a sack six feet long; he was levelling the herbage on the bank of a ditch, and ramming it into his bag. Not being at all in the secret, I questioned him as to the use of his crop.

"What is it for?" said he: "why, for the mokes to be sure. Don't they like it—jest!"

"You don't pretend that they prefer it to grass or hay?"

"Don't they though? They perfers it to anythink. If you got a moke, you jest try him: if you lives handy here, I'll be proud to sarve yer. Bless your 'art, about three bags on it turns 'em out as sleek as a mole. Vy, look 'ere; it's pretty nigh all juice—aint it?" With that he squeezed a handful of the reedy grass till his fingers were dripping with moisture. "The mokes is no fools, whatever you think on 'em: they likes gravy in their meat as well as Christians. He, he! You don't catch 'em leavin' on it till 'tis all gone, I can tell yer. I could sell ten times as much as I do if I could git it, only 'tis so fur to take it. This 'ere 's a-goin' to Camden Town, more nor two mile. If I had a moke o' my own I'd do well."

By this time he had reaped a dozen yards of the bank, and cut enough to fill his bag. He rammed it in with his head and shoulders as the sack lay upon the ground, until it was tight enough to stand upright. Raising it on end till it towered far above his head, he stooped, and buckling it round his waist by straps stitched to the sacking, walked off with bended back, the ponderous load projecting forwards over his head, like the coffin of Daniel Lambert on the back of a Lilliputian undertaker.

Bob has now grown quite the little man of business. His

ambition is gratified, for he has two "mokes" of his own, and is doing a smart trade as commissariat to a pretty numerous regiment of donkeys, if one may judge by the palpable improvement in his costume and the expression of his confident face. He reaps and sells his crops without paying rent, taxes, or tithe. The paternal cottage has been lately painted and whitewashed; little Dick has made his first appearance in a shirt; and a neat-boarded shed, well pitched with tar, and weather-proof, in the rear of the dwelling, gives token at once of Bob's prosperity and his humane care for the comforts of his friends and benefactors the mokes, who have helped in bringing it about. How he employs his time and his donkey-power in winter is a secret which, not being in his confidence, I have not been able to fathom. I have no doubt that he has found a market for both, and turns them to good account. I encountered him only a few days ago in a field not far from the Seven Sisters' Road. He was accompanied by young Dick; both were busy "reaping where they had not sown;" and their allies, the mokes, tethered to a hurdle in an adjoining lane, stood witnessing the operation through a gap in the hedge with characteristic satisfaction.

FEMALE INDEPENDENCE.

Nancy Goodall was the only daughter of poor parents. Her father was a day-labourer upon a farm at which when a boy it was my wont to pay an annual visit at harvest-time. She was a sprightly and active young woman when, while yet a child, I first saw her. Born to servitude, she graced her lot with those quiet virtues which render servitude respectable and often endearing. In her twenty-first year she accompanied the squire's family to London in the humble capacity of housemaid. There she remained for nearly thirty years, rising gradually through the various grades of service, until, finally installed as housekeeper, she had the sole management

of domestic affairs. She might, perhaps ought to have saved during this long period a considerable sum of money. She really saved nothing. The sole use of money, in her estimation, was to ameliorate the condition of those dear to her. Her parents, who, as they grew old and infirm, needed assistance, received the best part of her earnings, and by her bounty were saved from having recourse to the hateful charity of the parish. After their death her only brother, who had married young and imprudently, emigrated with a large family to America. It was Nancy's money and Nancy's credit that procured his outfit and paid his passage; and several years passed after his departure before she had discharged the responsibilities undertaken in behalf of him and his wife and children. Still no thought of care or anxiety for herself ever troubled her. She knew her old master too well to imagine for a moment that he would ever allow her to be in want. Since the death of her mistress she had been the friend rather than the servant of the young ladies, and after they were married and settled in the north, had been the careful nurse of the old squire, who, before he died, added a codicil to his will, which secured her, as he thought, a comfortable provision for life.

When the lifeless body of the old man was borne off to the family vault in Devonshire, Nancy felt herself completely alone in the world. She remained a few weeks in the house in Piccadilly, awaiting the settlement of affairs, and expecting the purchase of the annuity which she well knew had been bequeathed by her master. The cruelest misfortune overtook her at once. Owing to certain family quarrels, and some real or fancied neglect on the part of his heirs, which the deceased squire had violently resented in the disposition of his property, the will he had made was disputed on the ground of alleged insanity on the part of the testator; and after a great deal of strife and some litigation, the estate was thrown into Chancery. Neither of the litigants had the slightest objection to

Nancy's legacy, which each and all pronounced well deserved, and pledged themselves to pay: but no one paid it, and the desolate woman, now past the prime of life, was thrown, after a comparatively easy and luxurious existence, upon her own resources. The town-house was shut up, and Nancy, with one quarter's wages in her pocket, was turned loose on the desert of London to seek for the means of subsistence. As if it were decreed that nothing should be wanting to complete her distress, she was knocked down and run over by a coach while wandering about in search of a lodging; and emerged from the hospital—to which she was carried in a state of insensibility—three months after, a cripple for life, to begin the world again at fifty years of age upon a pair of crutches.

Nine-tenths of the women in existence so situated would have given up the contest, and retired to die in the workhouse. Nancy was made of harder stuff. In a dingy house in a by-street in Somers-town she took a humble lodging, and, determined to support herself, cast about for the means of doing it. The pride that kept her from asking alms of any one strengthened her resolution to do without alms. Hardly possessed of the power of locomotion, she still managed to creep about in search of employment. Needlework was out of the question—her way of life not having sufficiently skilled her in the art, and it being too late to learn; her sight, moreover, beginning to fail. So she boldly entered the lists of handicraft labour: paid a journeyman clogmaker for instruction in his craft, bought the necessary tools, and set about making clogs for the market. In muddy London there is an immense demand for these useful manufactures; and Nancy, with a woman's tact for an article of woman's wear, contrived to make her productions favourites with her sex. It was little indeed, but a few pence, that she got out of each pair; but she became expert from practice, and therefore never wanted employment. For seven years she pursued her

laborious trade, and supplied a large district of dealers with her stock. She faced the rigid economy and penurious fare to which she found herself suddenly reduced, after a life of plentiful abundance, with a courage and patient endurance that never flagged. Her one room was half-filled with narrow planks of wood, from which she sawed with her own hands the soles of the clogs, afterwards carving them to shape, and hollowing them for the reception of the foot. This was the labour of the morning, generally commencing with the dawn; the latter part of the day she spent seated at a little bench, cutting out and affixing the leathern ears, and finishing off the goods for the shopkeeper. She lived constantly surrounded with chips and cuttings, and used to boast that she smelt like a carpenter's shop. But the exercise preserved and even improved her health, and the little excitement of traffic gave a purpose and a pleasure to her toilsome life which she had never felt before.

Nancy is yet alive. Contrary to almost all precedent in Chancery cases, that one in which she was so deeply interested has been lately settled. Her master's will has been executed to the letter, and Nancy is now in receipt of an annuity considerably greater than the sum bequeathed for the purchase would have bought when she was eight years younger. She has retired to her native village—not to indulge in the pride of ease and sloth, but to set an example of usefulness and benevolence. She has voluntarily undertaken a task for which few are better qualified—that of educating practically young girls for service, two of whom she has constantly under tuition. If this short history of her life should meet her eye, which is not improbable, she may perhaps suspect who was the writer; but the very last thing she would think of would be the idea of taking offence at the narrative.

CURIOSITIES OF ROGUERY.

ALTHOUGH in the conduct of business there cannot be said to exist any debateable ground between honesty and dishonesty, inasmuch as the golden precept which commands us to do unto others as we would that they should do unto us, is ever at hand, and ever suggestive of the right rule of action, yet there is a wide field of operation for those who, rejecting the authority of this precept, and preferring the care and culture of Number One to all other considerations whatever, choose to live rather by their wits than their work. In London, and in all great towns, there are a thousand means of turning a penny, and a pound too, by practices and pursuits which, though opposed to the spirit of the law, are found in fact to be rarely punishable by it. It is hardly to be wondered at, when we take into consideration the infinite varieties of human character, that wherever men are congregated in great numbers, a certain portion of them should be found, whose pleasure and delight it is to beard, to violate, and to elude the penal statutes. Rogues of this sort abound in the metropolis, and no inconsiderable amount of skill and cunning are displayed in the pursuit of their vocation. It is a question whether with some of them profit alone, unconnected with peculation, would have any charms; their industry demands the spice and flavour of rascality to stimulate it into action: they have no wholesome appetite for an honest penny, and would starve and die

'out but for the excitement of roguery. The following outlines cursorily sketched from the life, may serve to introduce to the notice of the reader a few of the worthies who manage to enjoy the patronage of the public for services more than doubtful, and who, keeping for the most part out of the grasp of the law, do yet gain a living by its infraction.

THE FREE FORESTER.

This is a designation probably unknown to the majority of readers as applicable to the denizen of a crowded city: it is assumed, however, with no small degree of pride, by the members of a certain class well known to each other, and who are to be found sparsely scattered through the streets of London at all seasons of the year, with the exception of the fading autumn and during the rigour of winter. The free forester owes his title and his occupation to that inextinguishable love of nature which prevails more or less in all great towns and cities, united with his own independence of the claims of *meum* and *tuum*, and with the right which he has established, to his own satisfaction at least, to certain waifs and strays of the vegetable kingdom, or rather to certain vegetable property which he chooses to consider his lawful prey. He is a trader without capital; a seller who neither produces nor purchases; a gardener and arboriculturist without an inch of ground; a dealer in game and poultry too at times, having no license either to shoot or to sell the savoury wares, for the possession of which he would be puzzled to account.

With the very earliest breath of spring, the free forester, quitting his winter avocation, whatever it may be, appears in the streets of London, on the edge of some wide pavement, or between the shafts of a hand-cart, in charge of a goodly stock of the first budding promises of the opening year. Imitating the perambulating gardeners, he sets up the cry of "All a-growing and a-blowing!"—and among a population noto-

riously fond of flowers, who, if they can have a garden nowhere else, will establish one upon their window-sills, he soon succeeds in disposing of his roots. These consist of snowdrops, primroses, polyanthuses, violets, oxlips, slips of geranium, hen-and-chicken daisies, and other early blooming flowers, or sweet-smelling herbs. As the spring advances, and warms into summer, you see him still pursuing his rounds, or standing at his accustomed corner, well supplied with the blossoming flora of the season; tulips, hyacinths, roses—red, white, or mossy—fuchsias, rhododendrons, young variegated laurel, fir and box-trees in pots, bushes of rue and London-pride, balsams, geraniums, ranunculuses—everything, in short, that will grow out of the hothouse, and which garden-loving citizens are fond of cultivating in front or rear of their suburban dwellings. As summer wanes, and autumn steps quietly on the scene, the activity of the free forester would seem somewhat to abate: his cry is not so frequently heard; his stand at the corner of the street has altogether disappeared; and though he is here and there seen pushing through the crowd his hand-cart, still gay with the rich hues of autumnal blossoms, he yet drives but a laggard trade, and that only by dint of the lowest possible prices, which, however, he can well afford to take for wares which have cost him nothing, or next to nothing. Long before the chrysanthemum has bared her starry face to welcome the waning year, the free forester has vanished, like the last rose of summer, to return no more till the dawn of a new spring recals him to the scene of his labours.

But the reader naturally inquires, How does the fellow come by his merchandise? We are not in a condition to give a perfectly satisfactory reply to this question. Thus much, however, we know: he is seen to start from the neighbourhood of St. Giles's, not far from what yet remains of the old Rookery, late in the afternoon, or in the early twilight of a spring or summer's evening, sometimes driving before him an empty hand-cart, at others carrying over his

shoulders a large canvas sack of four or five bushel capacity. Directing his course towards the suburbs, doubtless in pursuance of a plan previously designed, he is beyond the limits of London ere night closes in; and, marvellous to say, long before the drowsy citizen has begun to dream of breakfast, he is back again to his expectant partner, at the point from whence he started. Consigning the produce of his night's industry to his chum, he turns into bed for an hour or two, while the other prepares the goods consigned to him for the inspection of the public. In this business no time is lost. We once witnessed, with perfect amazement, this apparently miraculous process, the operator dreaming of nothing so little as that his actions were under review. In the case referred to the wares were contained in a large bag, about two feet in diameter, and four or five in length, and must have weighed considerably above a hundredweight. The dresser—for so he may be appropriately called—turned them all out carefully upon the ground in the square back-yard of a twopenny lodging-house: this he did not by emptying the bag at its mouth, but by unbuttoning it at the sides, and laying open its contents. These consisted of flower-roots in full bloom for the most part, but crushed, heaped, and tumbled together in such a squashed condition, as to appear fit for nothing but the manure heap. But he very soon changed the aspect of the stock into a goodly show, of which a Covent-garden cultivator would not have been ashamed. Selecting the finest flowers from the mass, with a pair of short shears he cut away the bruised or broken leaves, and rinsing the plant in a small stream from a stopcock, set it firmly in a pot already prepared with mould, in far less time than it takes to describe the deed. Producing the mould-filled pots from an outhouse as fast as they were required, he soon had some dozens of fine blooming flowers in a condition for sale. Around the roots of each, as he set it aside as finished, he poured

carefully, using a small ladle for the purpose, a few drops of a dirty-looking liquid from an earthenware pan which stood in a corner: this no doubt was some powerful vegetable stimulant, under the influence of which the excited plants would, for one day at least (long enough for his purpose), assume the appearance of extraordinary healthiness and vigour. In fact, when, in less than two hours afterwards, the whole stock, ranged on a couple of broad hand-carts, sallied out of the lane on its way to the fashionable thoroughfares of the West End, the show of tender balsams with their delicate blossoms, and gorgeous geraniums glittering in fiery redness, looked so beautiful and so healthy, such a credit to the skill of the florist, that we felt it would be madness to attempt to convince any one not an eye-witness like ourselves of what had been their actual condition three hours back. That portion of the stock not intended for potting was more summarily dealt with. It consisted of roots adapted for front gardens, chiefly of common flowers and sweet-smelling herbs, which, having suffered little from the rough usage and confinement to which they had been subjected, were merely sprinkled with a little water, and then ranged round the edges of the carts, forming a kind of inclosure for those in pots.

If the reader is not yet enlightened as to the manner in which the free forester comes by his merchandise, let him live in the suburbs of London, and try the experiment, as we have for the last seven years, of cultivating a garden in front of his parlour window. Let him note, moreover, what becomes of the contents of a garden, front or back, of a suburban house during the interval between the departure of one tenant and the arrival of another. We are loth to cast a slur upon the character of any class, more especially of one that is so eminently industrious, that lives not only laborious days, but laborious nights as well, — one, too, that loves flowers and green fields, both a passion with ourselves; but the truth must out

for all that, and the plain unvarnished truth is, as Dr. Johnson would have phrased it, "The fellow's a thief, and there's an end on't."

But, as we have already hinted, this worthy does not confine his attention exclusively to botanical experiments; there is a department of natural history in which he has considerable interest, and by the cultivation of which he adds not a little to his annual income. Those Michaelmas martyrs, the geese, find their way somehow or other into his bag or his basket, and during the last week of September he drives a brisk trade with liberal-minded customers, whom he knows well where to meet with, and who, "asking no questions for conscience' sake," are content to buy a fat goose at a lean price, without troubling themselves to inquire under what circumstances the plump victim left the farmer's yard. His customers for poultry and game, it may be remarked by the way, are chiefly the well-employed workmen and operatives of the metropolis. In large establishments, where scores or hundreds of men are congregated for industrial purposes, he makes his appearance, after regular intervals, during the whole game season, generally coming an hour or two before pay-time, well laden with dainties doomed to smoke on the Sunday dinner-table of the artisan. The men banter him upon the cheapness of his wares; but his brazen self-possession is never put to the blush. He offers a couple of fowls or a hare at fifty per cent. below the selling-price in the cheapest market in London, observing, by way of recommending the bargain, "I suppose you thinks I stole 'em, but I'm blow'd if you arn't wrong this here once. Them fowls was sent to me by my old gran'mother in the country, to keep my birthday with; but you see the old lady didn't send no sarce nor sassingers, and as I can't afford to buy trimmins, and it goes agin my conscience to eat 'em without, I hoffers 'em to you at two-and-twópence." "Why, how often does your birthday come round?" asks the workman. "That hare I bought of

you a fortnight ago was given to you by a friend as a birth-day present!" "As often as I wants it of course," replies the chapman; "that's a privilege I've got, if I harn't got ne'er another. Come, take 'em at two bob: I can't be bothering all day with them birds." As may be readily imagined, at such prices his merchandise does not remain long on hand: goose, chicken, hare, or turkey soon find new proprietors, and the free forester, shouldering his basket, disappears without loss of time.

Occasionally he will make his appearance in the workshop in the middle of the week, bringing a couple of fresh hares or rabbits, or a basket of live fowls; "because," says he, "if you don't want to eat your Sunday's dinner on a Wednesday or Thursday, them pussies 'll keep for a week, and the birds is fresh enough, I 'spose, if you kills 'em when you wants 'em. A shillin' a piece—ax no more, and take no less. Didn't smug 'em nether; if I had, they'd a been eighteenpence. Got a man to steal 'em for me, a friend o' mine, as wants to be off to Botany arter his wife, as was sent over by mistake. I gived him the job cos it went to my heart, it did, to see him a grievin' an' a takin' on so. Come, who's for the live birds, and who's for the cats? Don't all speak at once, cos I hates confusion and bother. There, if that arn't enough for the money, I'll give you the next for nothin'!" One would think, by the light-hearted hilarity of the fellow, that his conscience was pretty clear of offence; but the expression of his eye belies his rattling tongue, and tells of a lurking dread of some not improbable mischance, which he is not altogether unprepared to meet. We must remark that it is not always that the viands he offers for sale are fit for eating. He is in the habit occasionally of intercepting a cargo of fish or a "lot" of game on its way to the river, where, in the dawn of morning or the dead of night, certain dealers in those commodities are wont to consign their stale and unsaleable stock to the bosom of Father Thames. His impudence enables him to pass off

such wares with unblushing effrontery; he knows that, however offensive they may have been to the olfactories for this week past, the keenest nose will detect nothing wrong after he has "*taken the stink out of them;*" a process which he effectually performs, and the means of doing which he guards as a profound secret. If he encounter complaint on the subject of such bargains on again making his appearance at his accustomed haunt, he flies into a violent rage with the fictitious personage who, he swears, "sold him the lot of goods," by which he declares he not only lost money, but disobliged his best customers. His career is not generally of very long duration; his constitution would seem to be colonial, with an antipodal tendency: he is apt to become the subject of compulsory emigration, and is often required to complete his botanical studies, and to consummate his natural history experience, under official surveillance in a far-distant region. Some of them, however, being their own "fences," and having the caution to keep their depredations within bounds, escape such untoward accidents; and after accumulating a sufficient fund, cease their perambulations, and settle down in some safer calling. It is rare to meet with a man of mature years leading the life of a free forester in London.

THE HORSE-MAKER.

We might fill a volume with the performances of this worthy, but must perforce despatch him summarily, as others are waiting to be limned as soon as we have moved him out of the way. This notable personage locates principally in the neighbourhood of Whitechapel, though many of his kith and kin are to be met with in or near the neighbourhood of Smithfield, and in the lowest parts of Westminster. In appearance, the horse-maker has nothing Cockneyish or London-like about him; even his dialect, though he be a Cockney born and bred, is in some degree provincial both in idiom and accent. His

costume is that of the respectable agricultural yeoman or small farmer; and is always in neat and tidy trim. He affects a rustic gentility and simplicity of behaviour, and disarms suspicion by his cheerful, open, loquacious, and unsophisticated manner: he makes no great parade of himself in the markets, never attending, in fact, when his presence can be dispensed with. By this means his simulated character lasts him the longer, and he is saved from the disagreeable necessity of shifting the scene of his labours. His business is to purchase horses which, from accident, vice, disease, or even old age, are rendered unfit for the service of man, and then, by means best known to himself, to metamorphose the poor beasts into quiet, plausible, serviceable-looking steeds, and to sell them, while yet under the influence of his all-potent incantations, to unwary customers. There is hardly a disorder horse-flesh is heir to the symptoms of which he cannot temporarily banish, by means of drug, knife, cautery, or some secret nostrum; while there is no animal so vicious but that he can subdue him for a time to quiet good behaviour. By dint of shears, singeing, currycomb, and brush, under his direction the roughest hide assumes the radiant polish of the turf; by the cunning application of ginger or cayenne to the jaws, the nostrils, the ears, or elsewhere, the dullest worn-out hack is stimulated into sprightliness and demonstrations of blood and breeding; and the poor honest brutes are compelled by his arts to play the hypocrite, and to assume virtues and qualities to which they have perhaps been strangers all their lives.

The horse-maker has an intimate connection with the knackers' yards, to the proprietors of which he is well known as a customer. Not a few of his bargains in horse-flesh have been previously doomed to the dogs (or rather, in London, to the cats), and have been temporarily rescued by him from the knackers' knife. So well is this known, that respectable dealers in the metropolis, on sending a horse to be

slaughtered, invariably charge their servants to see the animal slain before quitting the premises of the knacker. If this precautionary measure be omitted, it is more than possible that the owner of the beast may find himself, a few days after, mounted on the very brute which he had condemned to the knife, having bought him, re-manufactured, to supply the place of the supposed dead one. An instance actually occurred no great while ago of a farmer selling an old roadster for dog's-meat price at Barnet Fair, and buying him again two days after at Smithfield, riding home well pleased with his purchase, and only discovering the fraud through the unaccountable familiarity of what he supposed to be the stranger horse with his old quarters.

A favourite speculation of these worthies, and one that generally pays a swinging per-centage, is by clubbing together to purchase at a country fair a lot of wild colts fresh from the hills, and, by dint of doctoring and dressing, to prepare them for exhibition and sale at the West End auction-marts. We have more than once witnessed the sale of these job-lots, which very rarely result to the satisfaction of the purchasers. We have seen each separate nag, just two minutes before he was led out to exhibit his paces in view of the company, subjected to certain indescribable manipulations and applications of stimulating nostrums, intended and calculated to make him counterfeit the gait and action of thoroughbreeding, or something like it; and many a hack, whose actual value must have been something between seven and ten pounds, have we seen knocked down for from twenty to thirty guineas, or even more, to heedless amateurs in horseflesh, who, before a week was over, would have been too glad to part with their bargains at a loss of fifty per cent. Still, it is possible at times to get a bargain even from a horse maker. From the intimate practical knowledge these fellows acquire of all the various diseases and vicious propensities of the race *equine*, it does occasionally happen, especially when the defect

is a vice, and not a disease, that they will effect a thorough cure. We were once too well acquainted with a brute who possessed every quality that a horse should have, with the exception of docility, the want of which nullified all the rest. Though valued at between fifty and sixty guineas, from his fine proportions and strength of limb, he was sold, after a score of grooms had tried their skill upon him in vain, for three sovereigns to a member of this fraternity, who, a fortnight afterwards, exhibited him in harness drawing near two tons with perfect ease and willingness, though he had not heretofore in any other hands submitted to become of any use whatever. His vanquisher declared that he had taken the devil out of him by driving him from Vauxhall to Bristol in one day, allowing him one day's rest, and then back again on the third day. Be this as it may, the horse was purchased at a high price for her Majesty's service, and we saw him frequently afterwards performing the hardest work with perfect quietness and docility.

This class of deceivers seldom succeed in their attempts to get on; they are for the most part men who, seduced by the love of the saddle and whip, have deserted the occupations to which they were brought up, and have sought, without capital, to participate in the profits of the regular dealer in horses. Not a few of them are the proprietors of ricketty cabs or hackney-coaches, which, like the beasts that draw them, have been long ago fairly worn out in the service of the public. It is not unusual to encounter an equipage which, including horse, harness, and vehicle, would be a sorry purchase at five pounds. The hungry proprietor, seated on the box, crawls about the streets in the dusk of the evening in hopes of picking up another, and still another, last fare: he is afraid to halt at the regular "stand," lest his poor staggering brute should be too stiff to move off in case of a sudden call. The scoundrel has platted an iron wire into the thin end of his whip-lash, well knowing that nothing short of actual torture

will goad the wretched jade he drives into anything faster than a walking-pace! One is often tempted at such a spectacle to pray for a collision with some racing van or omnibus, which shall shake the little remaining life out of the poor brute, and thus release him from the tyranny of his master, punishing the biped at the same moment for his dastardly inhumanity.

THE DOG-MAKER.

Dog-making was a craft once practised in London, though with but limited and temporary success. The business had its origin in the great demand for pet dogs of certain breeds (principally Blenheim spaniels and small terriers, both Scotch and English), taken in connection with the great mortality which marks the first year of canine existence. If there were any accurate statistics on such matters, they would show us, there is little doubt, that above one-third of the dogs bred for pets, and designed literally for the lap of fashion, die in their first year. The dog-dealers, not much relishing this great deduction from their profits, were in the habit, not many years ago, of fitting the skins of their deceased favourites to the bodies of a more hardy race. A breed of mongrels was kept on hand, doomed to be promoted in course of time to the cast-off finery of the defunct *élègantes*. This process was so ingeniously accomplished, that the fraud could be detected only by a very minute inspection. We have seen one of these puppy masqueraders, the offspring of a bull-bitch, so cleverly indued with the hide of a King Charles's spaniel, as not merely to preclude all likelihood of suspicion, but to baffle any investigation that could be made without exciting the animal's outcries. The skin was not only cut to measure, and carefully sewed on, but was further attached by a powerful cement — and it is worthy of remark that the experiment would have resulted in the speedy death of any animal which does not,

like the dog, perspire through the tongue, as the cement used must necessarily prevent perspiration through the skin. Such living manufactures were generally sold at the corners of streets, and got rid of, if possible, out of hand, for reasons too obvious to mention. Dog-*making* may, however, now be considered as a branch of industry that has become extinct. That spirit of improvement in the economy of manufactures which of late years has tended so much to cheapen production, has had its effect upon the dog trade as well as others, the professors of which have arrived at a conclusion, the soundness of which we have at least no logical reason to doubt—namely, that it is more remunerative to steal the animals in a genuine state, than to fabricate false ones at the cost of no small labour and ingenuity, which, after all, for want of a speedy sale, may be frequently thrown away.

THE DOG-STEALER.

The dog-stealer's establishment — and there are a considerable number of them in different parts of the metropolis — is generally situated in the immediate neighbourhood of some mews or livery stables, and is in fact very frequently a dilapidated stable, temporarily fitted up for the reception of the stolen animals. A servant of the proprietor is always in attendance on the premises, both day and night, provided with food, and a whip, to feed the hungry, and castigate the quarrelsome. He receives all animals bearing a marketable value which are brought by the dog-thieves, who continually perambulate the streets at all hours of the twenty-four in search of their prey—giving a check upon his employer for a certain specified sum, according to a scale agreed upon. These kidnappers, we may observe, have no necessary connection with any particular establishment, but generally dispose of their plunder at the receptacle nearest at hand, or at that where the highest price can be obtained; for in this, as well as in all

other trades, there exists a strong competition. Many of these ill-doers, it is pitiable to remark, are women, who meet with vastly more success in the capture of the small and expensive pets which abound in the fashionable quarters of the town than do the men or boys.

We cannot be mistaken in our narration of the details of this nefarious traffic, because we have sat pursuing our vocation within twenty feet of one of these receptacles for a whole twelvemonth, unseen, though observing everything. During this period the whole economy of the trade became as palpable to view as it would have been had we organized it ourselves. At all hours of the day, but chiefly at dusk and early morning, the kidnappers would arrive, bringing dogs for transfer, and receiving a scrap of paper in exchange. Sometimes the animals were brought openly in arms, sometimes they were led by a string — but more frequently were concealed about the person of the thief, and only produced after entering the premises and closing the door. Pampered lap-dogs, poodles, terriers, and spaniels, came in pretty regular rotation to this den of disquiet; and occasionally pointers, setters, beagles, and retrievers, of considerable value, would make their appearance. Now and then, too, some huge, unsightly, rough-coated, half-starved cur would arrive, whom the passing of the dog-cart act, then recently enacted, had probably thrown out of occupation, and condemned to a wandering life of perpetual famine: once within the portals of this *inferno*, his miseries were soon terminated, he being introduced for the purpose of furnishing food for his fellow-prisoners.

A considerable per-centage of the stolen dogs find their way back to their owners — and indeed it is a disappointment to the receiver if the loss be not advertised, and a reward offered. When this is not readily done, unless the dog be of a breed for which there is a great demand, the loser will probably hear of his or her favourite, and be informed that the missing pet

will be forthcoming on the payment of a certain sum. Unfortunately, however, fancy dogs, especially of what is called King Charles's breed, are in great request at the present time in Holland and Belgium, and considerable numbers are exported periodically to supply the markets in those countries. The stock in this country is not so much diminished as this continual exportation would lead us to infer, because the Dutch and Belgic dog-thieves, who are not a whit less expert than their Anglican brethren, industriously manage to ship a good proportion of them back again — so that many a bewildered poodle passes half his lifetime at sea. What becomes of those which, being unfit for exportation, are not redeemed by their owners, it is not easy to say. Great numbers, without doubt, are sacrificed for the sake of their skins; others, docked, clipped, and shorn (and sometimes dyed) out of all resemblance to their former selves, are sold to sporting gentlemen at country fairs and markets; and others, as we have good reason to know, after enduring the miseries of imprisonment and semi-starvation for weeks, or perhaps months, are emancipated by a disease which attacks the skin, upon the first appearance of which they are sent summarily about their business, less they should infect the whole stock in trade.

The dog-stealer contrives most adroitly to evade the law. The proprietor of a dozen dog-layers is never seen even in company with a dog when making his rounds. The rewards are claimed and received by agents who well understand the department of the business allotted to them; no cross-questioning will ever induce them to vary from the stereotyped statement they have to make. It is said that they are allowed by their principal a very liberal per-centage, and that to make the transaction safe to him, they have to pay over the amount of the reward before they receive it — that is, upon the reception of the missing dog for restoration to the owner. Speaking commercially, the allowance ought to bear a thumping com-

mission for *del credere*, seeing that the deliverer runs a risk of never getting the reward, or at least of being put to the inconvenience of swearing a false oath to obtain it.

The ostensible profession of the dog-stealer is almost invariably that of dog-doctor, and indeed in some parts of the town he makes a good income by this branch of his business, frequently getting a golden fee in payment for a prescription for some aristocratic valetudinarian pug or poodle. If his receptacles attract the notice of the police, they are described as infirmaries, and the prisoners as patients; and even if a lost dog be discovered in one of them, he has of course been deposited there for the purpose of medical treatment by a party unknown to the proprietor.

It sometimes happens that the reward offered for the recovery of a stolen dog is not deemed of sufficient amount by the thief in possession, who will coolly negotiate for a more liberal remuneration. A friend of the writer lost a handsome spaniel, and had bills printed, offering a guinea for his recovery. Next day he received a note, informing him that if the reward were doubled he would see his favourite in the course of a few hours. A reply, acceding to the demand, was despatched to the address indicated in the note. The owner was accosted a few hours after, on his way home from office in the evening, by two men, one bearing the dog in his arms; and though he had formed an excellent plan for recovering possession of his own without paying anything, he yet found it necessary to keep to the terms of his contract, or else forego for ever the recovery of the dog—an alternative not to be thought of.

Dog-stealing would appear to be carried on with more impunity than any other species of theft, seeing that the convictions, when viewed in connection with the number of offences daily and almost hourly occurring, are astonishingly few.

THE DRINK DOCTOR.

In what dark, dim, and mystical region of the metropolis this potent and indispensable ally of the licensed victualler and the gin-king has fixed his habitat we could never yet succeed in discovering; but we have marked well his doings, and have strictly noted his stealthy but undeviating appearance in the wake of the distiller's cart and the brewer's dray, in whose track he follows as sure as night succeeds to sunset. Come forth thou man of mystery; present thyself for once to the eye of day; and though the sun never yet shone upon the performance of thy secret labours, yet allow his gladsome rays to reveal to us thy lineaments for this once only; show thy grave face to the glare of noon, and attest if thou wilt the truth of our delineation, while we portray thee and thy function for the benefit of that public from whose gaze thou modestly retirest, and whom—thyself withdrawn in diffident obscurity—thou art content to poison in the pursuit of thy quiet and unobtrusive profession!

Mister Quintin Quassia, D.D., as the gin-spinners and beer-druggers who require his services gravely address him, is a being of seedy garb, of saturnine aspect, and taciturn disposition. He is a member of no learned profession, and is in possession of no degree, save a very considerable degree of quiet impudence and self-possession. Though enjoying the designation of Doctor—a title which he doubtless owes to his abundant use of drugs in the practice of his art—he would be perhaps better described as a professor of magic-multiplication, seeing that, without condescending to have recourse to a vulgar arithmetical process, he has the power of doubling, ay, and more than doubling, the quantity of certain potables as delivered per invoice into the cellar of the publican. Under his miraculous management three hogs-

heads of proof gin from the distillers shall in the course of a single night become transformed into seven substantial hogsheads of "Cream of the Valley." He has the assistance of a redoubtable necromancer in the person of Father Thames, whom he secretly invokes from his oozy bed at the dead of night. He has also another liquid spirit at his beck—a spirit whose touch is torture, and whose function it frequently is to burn what fire will not consume—the fiend of sulphuric acid, whose vulgar retail name is vitriol. In his pouch he carries poisons of terrible efficacy, and thrist-exciting drugs to consummate his work.

The presence of Quintin Quassia at the publican's is invariably required, as we have intimated above, after the arrival of a consignment of spirits from the distiller, and is always preceded by the advent of a number of goodly cones of loaf-sugar, without the admixture of which the gin-drinking legions of London would not tolerate a drop of the diabolical mixture concocted for them. Upon such occasions the doctor may be seen dropping in, as though accidentally, at the bar-parlour a few moments before the hour of closing; taking a seat as a customer, he sits sipping a glass of grog until the last lingering sot has cleared out—when, *presto!* he and the landlord, stripping to their shirt sleeves, are off to the cellar, and plunged at once into the mysteries of that manufacture upon the success of which the prosperity and reputation of the arena of drunkenness and demoralization mainly depend. The floods of life-destroying liquor sold in London daily under the names of "Cordial Gin," "Cream of the Valley," "Old Tom," and a dozen other popular appellations, are all so many specious mixtures, having pure unsweetened spirits as a basis, made up to suit the sophisticated taste of the London drunkard. Were the spirit retailed to the public in the same condition in which it is consigned by the distiller to the publican, the latter would soon find his customers reduced to less than a tithe of their present number. The mild though potent

flavour of unmixed spirits has not sufficient zest for the dregs of the London population, who are the principal supporters of the gin-shop; they look for the fiery sting that vitriol imparts, which they relish for its fatal warmth, and consider as a proof of the genuineness of the poison they imbibe. Moreover, they require it highly sweetened, and in this they are amply indulged by the doctor, who knows that their depraved thirst is rather excited than satisfied by sweetened spirits.

The enormous fortunes realized by the proprietors of gin-shops situated in certain favourable localities are altogether due to the operations of the Drink-Doctor upon the material there so abundantly retailed over the counter, and "drunk on the premises." It is a fact that gin is often ostensibly sold at many of these palaces at a cost scarcely a fraction above that at which it can be furnished by the distillers. We once asked the proprietor of one of these thriving temples of vice how it came to pass that he could sell his "mountain dew," as he called it, at a price which barely covered the original cost of the neat spirits. "You know nothing about it," said he: "if the cost were double what it is, I should make a spanking profit out of it notwithstanding." Of course he could. We had not then had the pleasure of the doctor's acquaintance, nor obtained any insight into the nature of his nocturnal orgies.

The extravagant and plundering profit realized by the gin-spinner sufficiently accounts for the eagerness with which licenses are sought after whenever a pretext can be found or formed for opening a public-house or a gin-shop. The growth of these places is gradual, but unfortunately too certain. The plan generally pursued in the metropolis is this: a beer-shop is first started in a carefully-selected locality; every means is used to draw custom to the spot; the liquor sold is good, cheap, and unadulterated; and a reputation is speedily gained for the house among the operative classes, whose great delight, recreation, and luxury is beer. When the trade is

nursed up to its highest point, a memorial is got up, addressed to the proper magisterial authorities, and signed by every householder in the neighbourhood whose signature can be by any means obtained. This is forwarded to the magistrates, who at their next district meeting consider the claims of all applicants; and if the petitioner have any influence, or any friend among the magnates of his parish, a license is pretty sure to be granted. In a very short period the humble Tom and Jerry shop is transformed into a gin-palace—the wholesome beer is gradually changed for a loathsome physicky wash, in order that the customers may prefer spirits to beer—the manufacture of vitriol and sugar commences—and the neighbourhood, changed from "Beer Street" to "Gin Lane," is in due course of being poisoned and demoralized *secundum artem* —the proprietor confidently contemplating a retirement at no distant period upon a comfortable estate. Any time between ten and twenty years ago this prospect was pretty sure to be realized by any one fortunate enough to obtain a license, and (being unencumbered by moral or conscientious scruples) in the possession of moderate industry and perseverance. We knew a young man who, without a single talent, or capacity enough for a tradesman's craft, in seven years realized a clear ten thousand pounds, and retired upon that capital to the enjoyment of a country life while yet in his twenty-ninth year!

The doings of the doctor in the beer department are not of so miraculous a character as those already described, still they are worthy of note. Though the contents of a cask of beer cannot be doubled with any probability of finding a thoroughfare through the popular throat, yet they may, with cautious management, be increased some thirty or forty per cent. Quassia, liquorice, coculus Indicus, and certain other cheap ingredients, will carry a profitable quantity of water, and yet impart a flavour to the beer which, so far from being repulsive to the palate of the London sot, long trained by the pub-

licans to the tolerance of such poisons, is rather agreeable than otherwise. But the chief aim of the doctor with regard to beer is to render it provocative of thirst, so that the fatigued workman who comes in for a glass to refresh himself, may find, upon drinking it, that a quart more at least is necessary to quench the thirst it has excited. By this means drunkards are manufactured by degrees, and thus men sit the livelong evenings through, drinking eight or ten pints consecutively, and wondering the while at their own capacities for imbibition.

It is by the aid of the doctor that the weakest wash of the brewer is transformed at times into treble X. Under his talismanic charm simple porter becomes double stout, and fetches more than double price. He knows the precise taste of all classes of customers, and readily prepares from the common staple supplied by the brewer either the full-bodied "lush," in which the swart and brawny coal-heaver luxuriates, or the thin supper beer of the sober tradesman or sedentary clerk. He is called into council invariably when a new house is opened, and pronounces learnedly upon the precise character of the beverage which will suit the neighbourhood, and which of course he undertakes to manufacture. His exploits have, however, been much limited of late years, owing to the opening of a vast number of houses belonging to brewers, who, not cherishing any great opinion of the doctor's skill, prefer that the beer-bibbing public should have an opportunity of fairly estimating their own, and who consequently make it a rigid condition with their tenants (who are required to deal exclusively with their landlords) that the malt liquors they are supplied with shall be retailed to the public in an unsophisticated state. Still, the doctor has his laugh against the brewer; for it is a lamentable fact that his artifices have been so long and so successfully practised, that the public palate is almost universally vitiated, and pretty generally revolts against the taste of unadulterated malt liquor. As a consequence, the "brewers' houses" are comparatively de-

serted, or else owe what degree of reputation and encouragement they enjoy to the success their owners may attain in acting as their own doctors, and counterfeiting those factitious beverages which the drinking public persist in preferring to the honest infusion of malt and hops.

One would imagine that a man whose entire occupation consisted of adulteration in one form or other would be at least so far awake to the consequence of indulgence in such villanous potions as we have described as to refrain from partaking of them himself. No such thing, however; the doctor is a doomed drunkard, and sooner or later sinks to the lowest abyss of drunken degradation, and dies the drunkard's death. Perhaps it is but justice that such a knave should perish in the pit which it has been the business of his life to prepare for his fellow-creatures.

THE PAWNER.

This is an ingenious and impudent scamp, who prides himself upon being able to get a living out of those who thrive and grow fat upon the distress and ruin of the necessitous classes. He is not unusually a tailor out of work, having no intention of getting in work if he can by any possibility avoid it; because he greatly prefers his liberty in the public thoroughfares, and the companionship of tap-room associates, to squatting eternally cross-legged upon the shop-board, engaged in the, to him, hopeless attempt of what Beau Brummel called achieving a collar. It would appear at first view that to make a profit by pledging were a still more hopeless task: he does not find it so. He knows that as in all other trades, so among the pawnbrokers, a violent competition prevails. In order to preserve their connection, and, if possible, to increase it, those who lend money upon the security of goods find themselves compelled to advance sums approximating as near as the safety of each several transaction

will allow to the actual commercial value of the goods hypothecated. So thoroughly is this principle carried out, that in those densely-populated neighbourhoods where pawnbrokers abound, any domestic utensil or commonly-used article of wearing apparel would be estimated at a dozen different establishments consecutively at a price hardly varying a fraction, and verging closely upon the value it would sell for at an auction. It is clear, then, that if the pawner can succeed in enhancing the apparent value of his wares, or if he can impose upon the pawnbroker by any kind of deception, he may procure a loan of the full value, or even sometimes above the full value, of the pledged articles. This he knows full well; but he knows something more—namely, that every breathing pawnbroker would rather lend three shillings than five, because the law allows the same interest upon both sums; or six shillings than ten, for the same reason. These facts being premised, behold him walking into a pawnbroker's shop with half-a-dozen pieces of figured waistcoatings on his arm, and a tailor's thimble on his finger. "Here," says he, "I've got six waistcoats to make, and I must spout one to buy the trimmings; let's have three shillings." Now three shillings has the smack of a bargain to the pawnbroker, who, if he has not been "done" before, will lend the money to a tailor thus circumstanced without much hesitation, even though the article impounded be scarcely worth more. In this way the plausible rascal manages to get off the raw material of coats, waistcoats, and trousers in considerable abundance; some cut out ready for making, though not intended ever to be made by him; others in the shape of remnants of cloth, speciously prepared to simulate a fine quality. It is not to be supposed that he invariably obtains from the pawnbrokers the entire value of his goods; that, indeed, is of no great consequence, because he knows how to find or to make a market for the duplicates, from which it is that he principally makes his profit.

It is a fact pretty well known to all who have paid any continuous attention to the habits of the operative classes, that by far the major part of the working-men of London muddle away the leisure of their evenings in the tap-rooms, or purlieus of beer-shops and public-houses. As these places are free to all comers, the pawner finds himself of an evening in the company of some dozen or score of thirsty artificers, who, having drowned what little prudence and caution they had in successive pots of beer, are in the precise condition he would wish them to be. Assuming the character of a broken-down tradesman, who has been compelled by misfortune to part with everything, he humbly requests any kind-hearted gentleman present who would do him a service, and at the same time secure an advantageous bargain for himself, to look at the various duplicates of his stock in trade, and select any article that may suit him. In this manner he contrives to get rid of the greater part of his tickets, and frequently realizes, from the combined transactions with the pawnbroker and the public-house dupe, cent. per cent. upon the original cost of his curiously-managed merchandise.

It may be readily conceived that the pawner does not confine himself to any particular kind of stock. Besides clothing, and the materials for clothing, he trades in articles of jewellery, silver and gold watches, mathematical and scientific instruments, fiddles, flutes, and trumpets—everything, in short, in a portable form and of indefinite value. These he picks up at auction sales; and as he gives but one price for an article for which he is pretty sure of obtaining two prices, his profit is neither small nor uncertain. He is also sometimes known to turn his trade of tailor to good account, by turning an old coat bought for a few shillings, pledging it, and selling the duplicate to a simpleton credulous enough to pay the price of a new one.

The career of this peddling rascal is of comparatively brief duration. In a few short years at most he wears out his voca-

tion, through want of prudence in carrying it on. The pawnbrokers in quick time get his face by heart, and his beer-drinking dupes are very apt to avenge their victimization by the exercise of a species of Lynch-law, which effectually indisposes him to further experiments upon their pockets. When debarred from the practice of his nefarious occupation, he cannot return to industrious labour, but generally takes to the road in the character of a tramp, and lives as long as he can upon the forced contributions of the industrious members of his craft. This is the lowest, as it is generally the last, stage of degradation; and it is vain to look for him further.

AUCTION GANGS.

It would appear to an uninitiated observer that property of any description, which has been consigned to an auctioneer for disposal by public sale, which is submitted to public competition, and which can be sold only with the auctioneer's consent and complicity, is pretty sure of producing, if not something like its actual value in the commercial market, at least its value to the parties present at the sale, minus that fair retailer's profit which it ought to be the effect of general competition to reduce to its minimum amount. However reasonable such an expectation, nothing is more uncertain than its realisation in the numerous auction marts in the metropolis. There exists a system of wholesale theft and robbery so widely diffused, and so universally carried into execution, that it is impossible to form any estimate of the plunder, which must be enormous in its aggregate amount, and which forms the daily and hourly booty of a set of heartless and unprincipled harpies, who grow rich and fatten upon the domestic misfortunes of their fellow-men. By the operation of this nefarious system, the apparently fair and honest procedure of sale by public roup is utterly vitiated; and the auctioneer—who in a case of unreserved sale, such as that in

which the property is adjudged to the hammer under a distress warrant, has no power either to protect the rights of the unfortunate owners, or to save himself from the degraded position he is forced to occupy—is made the unwilling tool of a set of scoundrels, to whom he is compelled to assign, one after another, articles frequently of high finish and sterling value, for sums paltry in the extreme, if not merely nominal.

Those who have noticed the rapid, almost sudden, growth and expansion of certain brokering chapmen and dealers in articles of furniture, pictures, musical instruments, curiosities, bronzes, vases, and objects of *virtû*, must have been often struck with surprise at their miraculously speedy prosperity. The small front shop soon bursts into the back parlour; it then creeps upstairs; then the proprietor buys out his neighbours, and overflows first on one side, then on the other, with his fast-increasing stock, till at length half the street, or the whole of it, is one huge repository of everything domestic which necessity, luxury, or vanity can demand and industry supply. The course of knavery we are about to describe may serve to moderate the surprise of the observer.

Be it understood, then, that there exists a species of federal union, never talked about, yet open to all whose trade it is to buy by auction for purposes of retailing. The primary object of this union is, to suppress and prevent that competition which it is the purpose of public sale to elicit. As a general rule it may be affirmed that of this union every broker, dealer or buyer by trade, whose principle of integrity is not sufficiently strong to resist the temptation, is, tacitly at least, a member. And indeed, however honest a dealer may be, he is often compelled in self-defence to wink at the proceedings of the gang, even though he refrain from participating in their vile gains. We must not be supposed to infer that this iniquitous confederation is organised upon any regular system—that it boasts of any rules or written documents of any kind. Such a tangible embodiment of its principles would of

course be fraught with peril to the parties concerned, and is therefore avoided. The phrase "honour among thieves" expresses the sole law by which the proceedings of its numerous members are regulated; and though they often quarrel bitterly over the division of the spoil, and have been seen to fight furiously for their imagined rights, they are never known to have recourse to the law for protection. From all we can gather concerning the origin of this foul conspiracy—and we have taken some pains in the investigation—it would appear that it has been of slow and gradual growth, and that it was, in the first place, the spontaneous offspring of the cupidity and dishonesty of a very limited group of confederated rascals. It is affirmed—with what truth we know not—that it was first detected in operation among the Jews of a certain locality, and that it was immediately imitated on all sides, instead of being suppressed, as it might have been, by the strong arm of the law and the force of public rebuke, had the infernal machinations of its members been made known. However this may be, it is pretty certain that since its first rise, which might be dated at less than a score of years back, it has spread like a pestilence to every part of the metropolis; and that, at the present moment, it cannot be predicated with absolute certainty of any auction-room situated between Knightsbridge west and Mile-end east, or Highgate north and Peckham south, that on any given day in the year there shall be a fair sale of any specified kind of portable property. If the *gang* be present—and they are always present if the property to be disposed of offers them any considerable advantage—they will be sure to accomplish two things: in the first place, they will get most of the lots they desiderate knocked down to them at a low bidding; and, in the second place, they will prevent any stranger, who is not a professional buyer, from obtaining any article for a sum much less than double its value.

On a certain day in the year 1847—we do not choose, for

certain reasons, to be more particular as to date — we attended a sale, where, among other valuable species of property, a pretty large collection of pictures was to be sold. Our object was to purchase a clever production of Fuseli's, should it fall within the limited range of our pocket. Being pressed for time, we had not leisure to change an old office coat in which we had sat all the morning, and consequently made our appearance at the sale-room in somewhat seedy trim — to which accidental circumstance may be doubtless attributed the revelation we have to make. It should be mentioned that the property was that of a defunct dealer, and that his widow was then in the house awaiting with anxious heart the result of the sale, upon the proceeds of which her prospect of future comfort depended. We found the rostrum of the auctioneer surrounded by the *auction gang*, among whom, all unconscious of their honourable fraternisation, we with considerable difficulty shouldered our way, and obtained a standing position in front of the revolving easel upon which the paintings were then exhibiting to the crowd of bidders.

"Are you *in?*" said a greasy, grizzly-bearded face, reeking over our shoulder.

"Yes, thank Heaven, we are in," said we, mistaking the purport of the question.

"Oh, it's all right," said the questioner, turning to those behind him: "he's *in*."

We need not detail the whole of the conversation we overheard — enough to say that we soon discovered something of the nature of the conspiracy, and saw its profitable but villanous operation in full swing. Most of the pictures of greatest value were knocked down at wretched prices to three or four members of the gang; and once when a stranger endeavoured to secure a piece of some merit, the biddings were run up against him to an amount far beyond its utmost value, until he ceased to bid, when the lot was knocked down to one of the gang, who immediately repudiated his bidding, and

swore that he did not intend to bid more than a certain sum. After some squabbling, the lot was put up again, and bought by the gang against the stranger for far more than its worth. Once when we hazarded a bidding for the lot we came to purchase, we were stopped with, "Shut up, you fool; that's ——'s bidding: hold your mouth—you'll get it for nothing if you want it, at the *knock-out.*"

"At the knock-out!" we mentally ejaculated; "what upon earth is that?" We had heard the expression before, though casually, and it had escaped our memory; but we resolved this time, if possible, to penetrate the mystery, and learn whether it really was what we already began to suspect it to be.

"And where," said we in as careless a tone as we could assume, "does the knock-out come off this time?"

"Oh, at the old place; at ——'s back-room up stairs."

"What! C—— Court?" (This was a leading question, as we knew no one at C—— Court.)

"No; at W—— Street."

"To-night of course?"

"To be sure—half-past eight or nine."

We did not fail, shortly before nine o'clock, to ascend the stairs to the back-room of the house indicated in W—— Street. Before the hour had struck, the whole of the gang was present, and comprehended a much larger number than we had expected to meet. Among them we recognised several owners of first-rate shops, men of property and capital—one especially, who had recently portioned his daughter with thousands, along with others of *undoubted* respectability. Seating ourselves near the door, and calling for grog on the principle of doing at Rome as Romans do, we awaited with interest the result of the proceedings. A number of the smaller and more valuable paintings—gems of the Italian and Flemish schools—a few English specimens, and several finely-wrought vases and bronzes, had been already "cleared," and deposited in the

old-fashioned window-recesses, and upon tables in the room. As it was now past the hour, and all were supposed to be present, the door was closed upon the ejected waiter, and the "knock-out," which, as we had suspected, was nothing more or less than the *real sale* of the property, commenced. An individual, whom we shall designate Smash, whose vampyre-looking physiognomy is too well known to the frequenters of certain salerooms, was the unlicensed auctioneer of the evening. Catalogues being produced, all the lots bought by the gang were gone over seriatim, and now for the first time put up to serious competition. One by one they were knocked down to eager purchasers at prices varying from double to ten times the sums for which they had been obtained but a few hours before. Cash was paid down for each lot as it was sold, and deposited in a small tray in front of the seller, the lots, or an order upon the auctioneer for such lots as had not been cleared, being delivered to the respective purchasers. When the whole of them had been disposed of, the mass of gold and silver in the tray had accumulated to a considerable size. Smash then resigning the hammer, reimbursed from the heap before him the parties who had cleared the lots present—those who had purchased lots yet in the custody of the auctioneer having of course paid to the heap the difference only between the final biddings at the sham sale and the real one. These payments concluded, a considerable sum, the produce of that day's diabolical robbery of a forlorn and widowed woman, remained to be divided among the wretches who had thus successfully combined to plunder the helpless. When the sale was over, we could not help remarking that the whole of the property rested finally in the hands of three or four persons—Smash being one of them, as he had bid pretty freely, and consigned several good lots to himself. A few of the articles which had been run up to a high price, in opposition to parties who, not being in the gang, had presumed to bid against it, hardly realised half the sums they had cost;

but the loss upon these was compensated tenfold by the gain upon the remainder. And now came the division of the spoil, which was eventually managed upon a principle too complex to be fathomed by a casual observer. We noticed, however, when Smash read over the schedule, which occupied some time in preparing, that the individuals who had paid most money were to receive the largest share; and that those who bought nothing, and most probably never intended to buy, were to be paid at a lower rate. We did not witness the final distribution of the cash. Having no desire to pollute our fingers by the touch of such ill-gotten gain, we feigned a sudden excuse for quitting the room; and requesting our grizzly-faced friend to take charge "for two minutes" of our untasted grog, we quitted in sovereign disgust this den of ill-doers, who wanted only the virtues of personal courage and outspoken sincerity, to elevate them to the level of the burglar and the highwayman.

It is some years since we became thus aware of the existence of this atrocious system of plunder, and we have since frequently detected it in operation where we little expected to meet it. At book-sales it is a perfect nuisance. There are several scores of petty scoundrels who pass their lives at book-auctions, rarely bidding, and never buying if they can avoid it, and whose sole means of subsistence is this meanest of all possible modes of plunder. From inquiries we have cautiously made—for it is not an easy matter to obtain reliable information from the parties implicated—we are induced to believe that the majority of the real buyers would be glad to abate the practice, or put it down altogether, if possible. They find that where, as is generally the case with regard to books, the separate purchases are rarely of any great value, the trouble and inconvenience the practice entails are not compensated by the profit it affords: but the miserable wretches to whom such stolen scraps are daily bread, stick too hard upon their skirts to be readily got rid of.

It is a melancholy thing, and one that speaks volumes upon the demoralising effect of bargain-hunting upon the character, that among these plunderers of the weak, the friendless, and the prostrate in circumstances, should be numbered names of respectable standing in commerce—names well known and trusted among connoisseurs and collectors of works of art, relics of antiquity, or objects of vertú. But there is unhappily no margin left for doubt upon the subject. It would be in our power, on any given day, in the course of a few hours' visit to some of the finest collections of the first-class dealers in such matters in the metropolis, to pitch upon a score or two of valuable specimens which have come into the possession of the present owners through the scandalous medium of the "knock-out."* These men, be it remembered, have not the plea of necessity to advance in mitigation of their acts; they are surrounded with the materials and appliances of luxury, and have wealth at command, and might reasonably be expected to set an example of honesty in the pursuit of a profession which is sadly in want of it.

THE "ESTABLISHED BUSINESS" SWINDLE.

Just on the same principle as the American backwoodsman locates upon a plot of savage territory, fells the forest timber, burns the lumber, ploughs and sows the reclaimed land—then sells the whole clearing, stock, lot, and coming crop, to

* We saw, while writing this article, a very valuable painting bought by one of these gangs at a late sale of the property of a deceased proprietor, for a sum hardly covering the cost of the frame and the materials used in painting. What it realised at the "knock-out," and what was consequently the amount of plunder shared among the gang we were not able to ascertain. One thing we can state with certainty, and that is, that the present custodier of the picture (it would be an abuse of language to call him the proprietor) demands above a thousand guineas for it; and, considering its rare quality and transcendant merit, seems not unlikely to obtain the sum he demands.

some wandering emigrant in search of a settlement—so in London there is a class of men (and, we may add, of women too) whose favourite occupation it is to open new shops, and dig out, as it were, new channels for the currents of commerce, in the yet untried neighbourhoods of the ever-increasing metropolis; selling their newly-formed establishments so soon as they are set a-going, and in a fair way of success, either to new-married couples, country immigrants, or other parties whom they may suit. Against such a mode of gaining a livelihood, however singular it may appear to some, nothing can be justly said. These parties are often of essential service to the community, to whom they frequently introduce the conveniences of retail trade in localities which, without their speculative enterprise, would long remain strangers to them. They are the pioneers of traffic, whose mission it is to clear the way for the commercial host which has in due time to follow in their footsteps. They owe their success (and most of them are successful) to the possession of a rare tact and discrimination in reference to business matters, as well as to a considerable amount of that constitutional energy and restlessness which so remarkably characterise their prototype of the "far west." But as everything successful in London is sure to give birth to its counterfeit, so in this peculiar walk of life there are hundreds of unprincipled knaves who make a prey of the stranger and the inexperienced by the sale, under lying pretences, of mock establishments, whose pretended returns have no existence save in the records of a set of plausible account-books, artfully made up for the purpose of defrauding the unwary.

We shall more effectually expose the *modus operandi* of this sort of swindlers by a brief recital of what actually occurred to a friend of our own who unhappily fell into their clutches, than by any formal description that could be given.

In the year 184—, Walter S—— found himself, at the demise of his last surviving parent, under the necessity of

seeking a livelihood. With youth, health, and a tolerably good education, and with £600 in his pocket, he left his native place, and came to London to prosecute his fortune. After pushing his inquiries in town for near three months, without finding anything to suit him, he began to turn his attention to the morning papers, and to con the advertisements with a degree of interest which can only be appreciated by those who have been in similar circumstances. At length, lured by the prospect of a good income in return for very moderate exertions, he applied personally at the office of a house agent in Oxford Street, who had advertised his business for sale. The office was a sort of semi-shop on the ground-floor, at the west end of the street; and though bearing a remarkably neat and genteel appearance, had withal a somewhat worn and business aspect. This he thought looked well. Having made his purpose known to the single clerk, that functionary touched a bell, which brought out the principal from an inner chamber —a sober, rather sad-visaged, well-dressed individual, of about five-and-thirty, in deep mourning. Upon making known the object of his visit, and referring to the advertisement in the "Times" of that morning, the advertiser demanded whether it was the intention of his visitor to purchase the business for himself, or was he merely making inquiries on behalf of another person? S—— replied that he was acting solely on his own account, and that, if the business bore out the terms of the advertisement, it was his intention to make him an offer.

"I could easily satisfy you," said the other, "that this business would have justified me in employing much stronger terms of recommendation; but the fact is, that although I have doubled the returns since I bought it myself, I have no wish to recover more than the money I paid for it—the death of a relative having released me from the further necessity of any business occupation at all. But I fear you are too late; I parted with a gentleman not an hour ago who has all but

decided upon taking it. It is a pity you did not apply before: I cannot say anything decisive on it at present. Good-morning, sir."

"Good-morning;" and S—— had already reached the door, disappointment in his face, when the other cried, "Stop; you may give me your address. It is possible the first applicant may not conclude the affair. It strikes me, from some remarks he let drop, that he may not have the cash at hand, in which case I will let you know the day after to-morrow. By the way, we may as well understand each other—you will allow me to ask you if you are prepared to pay cash down, or at what date, supposing we should do business together?"

"Why," said S——, "I had not resolved to offer you the exact amount you demand; but I will say this, that if, after full investigation of the business and returns, we should deal, it will be for cash."

"In that case," said the agent, "you shall have the preference if the party who has just left does not conclude the purchase. Perhaps you will look in at eleven the day after to-morrow, and thus save time?"

S—— promised he would do so punctually, and departed, not without hopes of becoming yet the proprietor of so snug a concern.

At eleven precisely on the day appointed S—— opened the office door. The principal was standing at the desk in earnest, almost angry, discussion with an elderly man of gentlemanly garb and manners. He nodded to the new-comer, and motioned to his clerk to show him into the private room, which was so situated that S—— could not avoid hearing every syllable that was uttered in the office. He soon became aware that the stranger was the first applicant whose rivalry he had so much dreaded; and he heard with secret satisfaction, that though eagerly desirous of securing the business, he was not in a condition to pay down the required sum upon taking possession. He pleaded hard to be allowed to make a deposit of

part of the purchase-money, by way of binding the bargain, offering three hundred pounds in cash, and the rest in bills of short date. This the agent would by no means allow, and upbraided him with having deceived him in that particular at their former interviews. The stranger retorted, and the discussion grew almost into a quarrel, both parties becoming less ceremonious as the dispute waxed warm. It ended at last in the agent bowing out his would-be successor, who departed muttering his dissatisfaction in no measured terms.

The coast was now clear for S——, with whom, after apologising for the warmth of his language to the stranger, and remarking that it was a singular coincidence that S—— should have arrived just in time to witness their disagreement, an arrangement was entered into for examining the books and testing the present state of the business. References having been exchanged on both sides, that same afternoon the books of the last two years were gone over cursorily, but carefully, and checked with the annual audits, in a manner, and with a result, perfectly satisfactory to the incoming proprietor. During the examination two parties called and paid £5 as per-centage on houses let by the agent. Before leaving the premises, at sunset, S—— had agreed to spend the ensuing fortnight in the office, as well to test the average returns, as to learn the simple routine of management. The fortnight passed pleasantly enough. The books were left in the hands of S——, who conned them carefully, and never conceived the slightest suspicion of their genuineness. The clerk proved a rollicking out-spoken fellow, fond of cigars and bottled ale, and made no scruple of abusing his employer for not having raised his salary beyond a paltry hundred—affirmed that to his exertions and attention the success of the office was mainly due—and hoped that S——, on assuming the government, would have the liberality to do him justice. There was no lack of business during the period of probation. Persons dropped in with notices of houses and premises to let, for the

registry and exhibition of which on the office show-boards they paid willingly, according to a liberal scale of charges. The principal was absent for hours together every day, and once for two whole days, during which S—— had the luck to let a mansion in a neighbouring square for £180 a year—accompanied the incoming tenant in the examination of the premises, and received from the landlord 5 per cent. upon the first year's rent. In addition to this, business was transacted of a less important character, but which yet yielded a comfortable profit to the agent. As the fortnight drew to a close, it appeared plainly enough that the profits averaged altogether, after paying expenses, nearly £10 a week; and S—— began to think it was a pity that he had not struck the bargain before, and pocketed them himself. When the time was up, and the agent asked him if he was satisfied with what they were doing, and was disposed to conclude the affair, he was but too ready to do so; and the next day a lawyer was called in, an agreement drawn up in due form, and signed by both parties; £450 was paid down by S——, and bills at short dates were given for £150 more. The "agreement for a lease" of the offices, and the landlord's receipts for rents, together with all books and documents connected with the business, were made over to the new purchaser; and before starting for the north to "take possession of his newly-bequeathed property," the agent secretly advised S—— to get rid of the clerk. "You will find that you can easily manage the whole affair yourself," said he; "and you may as well save the expense of such a fellow, who is likely to prove an annoyance to any one who does not know how to manage him as I do." This recommendation proved in the result quite unnecessary. S—— took up what he now considered his permanent quarters on the ensuing day, and hired a sleeping-room close by for the better convenience of business. But no clerk made his appearance. This did not at first trouble the new proprietor, who attributed his absence to some convivial irregularity,

and felt pretty sure of his speedy return. Two, three, four days—a whole week passed, and no clerk—and what, alas! was a thousand times worse, not a single customer! S——, now a prey to awful suspicions of foul play, lived upon tenter-hooks. Another and another week elapsed; and though the stream of population rushed incessantly past the office door, there were hardly more signs of business in the deserted rooms within than in the silent mummy chamber of an Egyptian pyramid. At length, when nearly two months had passed away without the realization of a single shilling, and S—— had become gradually awake to the completeness of his victimisation, a stranger called with a demand for two quarters' rent, and threatened to seize if it were not paid immediately. S—— produced his receipts up to the last quarter, which proved to be mere fabrications, signed with a name the same in sound, but differing in spelling from that of the real landlord. From explanations that ensued, and from reference to neighbours, and to the inmates of the upper part of the house, the whole machinery of the abominable fraud, which had been brought to so successful an issue, was made fully apparent. The agent himself, the clerk, the "prior applicant," the customers, the gentleman who had taken the house in the square (which house, by the way, belonged to the landlord of that of which the office was a part, and was still unlet), the pretended landlord, who had paid the per-centage on letting—the very lawyer, or supposed lawyer, who had drawn up the agreement—all were partners or creatures of one swindling gang. The books were a set of documents cooked up for the purpose of delusion. Among the scores of notices exhibited on the show-boards only one was genuine, and that one was in reference to the house in the square, which had been made to play so important a part in the swindle. The others, it is true, indicated houses, shops, and chambers which were actually to let; but they had been copied from similar announcements displayed in other parts of the city, without the sanction of the

owners of the premises, and for the purpose of carrying out the fraud. As a termination to this villanous affair, poor S—— was fain to evacuate the theatre of his delusion, resigning the furniture and fixtures in consideration of a discharge in full of the landlord's claims for rent, and to recommence his researches in London for some career upon which he might enter with empty pockets and a little dear-bought experience.

The above is an "ower true tale," and is but one of a thousand which might be supplied from the private histories of multitudes who have fallen victims to conspiracies of the same class more or less extensive. Every recurring week brings to the metropolis adventurers from the country in search of a location in town, and desirous of investing their hardly-earned savings, or long-expected inheritance, in some established business, or fair speculation, which may offer to honest industry the prospect of competence and respectability. Such will do well to remember that the land-sharks are here on the look-out for their prey, which they will be prevented from gorging only by the exercise of the utmost vigilance and precaution on the part of their intended victims.

THE TIDE-WAITRESS.

THE "Venus rising from the sea," of the ancient Greek mythology, presents a very different picture to the imagination from that afforded by her modern antithesis, the tide-waitress of London descending into the bed of the Thames to forage for the means of subsistence among the mud and filth of the river.

The tide-waitress has few charms to boast of. Who and what she was originally, it would be difficult to guess. She is not young, and in what scenes her youth was passed, it would be in vain to inquire. Her antecedents are a mystery, the key to which is secreted in her own breast; the romance of her life has passed away with her youth; and whether that were joyous or grievous, you may ask her if you like—but she will not satisfy your curiosity. On the other hand, she is not old; age would shrink aghast from her way of life. An avocation pursued in perpetual contact with the mud and moisture of the river, is no calling for the woman of threescore and upwards, whom poverty has already made familiar with the cramps, and rheums, and rheumatisms, which she finds more than sufficiently plentiful without the trouble of raking them out of the mud.

No; the subject of the present brief sketch is invariably a woman in the prime of life, who has seen the world, and cares little for its conventionalities or its opinions. Driven, by some

cause or other—it may be by crime, it may be by want—from the acknowledged and beaten paths of industry, she has turned aside from the current of human activities, and made a property for herself out of the rubbish and the refuse which all the world besides are content to surrender as worthless. Upon this she contrives to make a living, and to keep out of the workhouse, to remain clear of which is the utmost stretch of her ambition. Education she has none, and she never had instruction worthy the name. All her knowledge is to know the time of low water, and the value of the wrecks and waifs which each recurring tide scatters all too scantily over her peculiar domain. Her garb and garniture are in appropriate keeping with her profession and accomplishments. She is bundled up in tatters more plentiful than shapely, and to which the name of dress could hardly be applied. On her head is the ragged relict of an old bonnet, the crown of which is stuffed with a pad; an old hamper is suspended at her side by a leathern strap round the shoulders; and in front she wears an apron, containing a capacious pocket for the reception of articles susceptible of injury in the basket. She cannot indulge in the luxury of stockings, but encases her feet in a pair of cast-off Wellingtons, begged for the purpose from some charitable householder, and cut down to the ankle by her own hand for her especial use.

Thus equipped, and armed with a stout stick, she goes forth to her labour so soon as the tide is half run out, and commences her miscellaneous collection amidst the ooze and slime of the river. She walks ankle deep in the mire, and occasionally omitting to feel her way with the stick, is seen to flounder in up to her knees, when she scrambles out again, and coolly taking off her boots, will rinse them in the stream before proceeding with her work. The wealth which she rescues, half-digested, from the maw of Father Thames, is of a various and rather equivocal description, and consists of more items than we can here specify. We can, however, from actual observation, testify to a portion of them: these are, firewood in very

small fragments, with now and then, by way of a prize, a stave of an old cask; broken glass, and bottles either of glass or stone unbroken; bones, principally of drowned animals, washed into skeletons; ropes, and fragments of ropes, which will pick into tow; old iron or lead, or metal of any sort which may have dropped overboard from passing vessels; and last, but by no means least, coal from the coal barges, which, as they are passing up and down all day long, and all the year round, cannot fail of dropping a pretty generous tribute to the toils of the tide-waitress. Among the coal-owners, however, this nymph of the flood, or the mud, is not in very good odour; they are known to entertain a prejudice against her profession. Her detractors do not scruple to aver that she cannot be trusted in the company of a coal-barge without being seduced by the charms of the black diamonds to fill her basket in a dishonest manner. We are loth to give credit to the accusation; at the same time we know that it is practically received by the wharfingers, who invariably warn her off when she is seen wandering too near a stranded barge.

Besides the materials above mentioned, there is no doubt that she occasionally comes upon a prize of more value. A bottle of wine from a pleasure boat may come now and then; and sometimes a coin or a purse from the same source; at least we have seen such things go overboard, and it is not impossible that the tide-waitress gets them. Some years since one of the sisterhood found one afternoon a packet of tradesmen's handbills buried in the mud under Waterloo Bridge. A waterman, who could read, advised her to take them forthwith to the owner. She did so, much to the worthy man's astonishment, who imagined that they were then in course of distribution by his two apprentices, who had left the shop in the morning with the avowed object of circulating them to the number of 3,000. The lads came home at night ostensibly wearied out with their day's work. They were astounded at the sight of the packet, which they had not even untied; and the youngest immediately confessed that, tempted by the other, he had joined in making

a holiday trip to Gravesend; that they had thrown the bills into the river when off Erith, feeling certain that there was no risk of discovery. It was a lesson they were not likely soon to forget—that the path of dishonesty and deceit is always a thorny one.

This river gleaner is rather a picturesque object when viewed from a good distance. Though her eyes are ever on the soil, and though she is constantly raking and handling it, yet she never stoops, as a stoop would swamp her skirts in the mud; she bends rather in a kind of graceful arch, supported by the stick in one hand. The tide, which proverbially waits for no man, shuts her out of her moist domain with rigorous punctuality, and then she retires to sort her wares and to convert them, in different markets, into the few pence which they may realize.

We feel quite safe in affirming that, little as is to be got by it, the above is the most successful kind of fishing that can be carried on in the present day in the Thames between London Bridge and that of Vauxhall. The times, and the river, too, are altered since fishermen cast their nets in the waters off Westminster, and Londoners ate the fish caught in the shadow of their own dwellings. It is more than a hundred and sixty years ago that, one fine summer's morning, a fisherman who was dragging the water off Lambeth Palace, found his net pinned fast to the bottom by some weighty substance, which seemed very reluctant to move. On lifting it cautiously to the surface, it appeared to be a somewhat lumpy piece of metal, impressed with certain cabalistic signs, which the finder, who was guiltless of the arts of reading and writing, was at a loss to comprehend. He pitched it, therefore, into the stern of his little craft, and quietly pursued his avocation till his day's work was accomplished. In the evening, when he had disposed of his fish, his thoughts reverted to the lump of metal in his boat; and he carried it to the house of one of his patrons to ascertain whether or not it might be of value. To the amazement of the gentleman into whose hands it was

thus strangely conveyed—and no less to that of the poor fisherman himself—it proved to be the great seal of the realm, which had been missing ever since the flight, in the preceding winter, of the craven and wrong-headed monarch, James the Second. There had been a rigid search made for it in all quarters, and from the evidence of Judge Jefferies it came out that James, who had always a superstitious kind of veneration for the great seal, which he regarded as a sort of talisman, had been for some time unwilling to trust it out of his sight. He had compelled his chancellor—that bloodthirsty judge—to remove from his noble mansion, and to reside in a chamber in Whitehall, in order that the object of his solicitude might be always near him. On the night of his clandestine flight, he had ordered the great seal and the writs for the new parliament to be brought to his bed-chamber. The writs he threw into the fire, and the great seal he carried off in his hand, and dropped it stealthily into the river opposite Lambeth Palace, as he traversed the space from Whitehall to Vauxhall. Whether he thought by this means to deprive the acts of his successor of the validity of legal sanction, we cannot say: the Prince of Orange managed to do very well without it; and if it had never been fished up to this day, but had been left to form part of the treasures of our present subject, the tide-waitress, and been sold for old metal at a marine-store, we imagine that government would have gone on much the same as it has done.

We have introduced the tide-waitress incidentally into royal company. It is no great matter. We leave our readers, if they choose, to settle the relative respectability of either party. What happened to the fugitive monarch may happen, and we fear is likely to happen, to the poor mud-faring woman. *He* died a pauper, dependent on the bounty of an alien—and *she*, alas! has the workhouse, or, which is perhaps more probable, the hospital in perspective, as the consummation of her career.

BUTTERCUPS IN LONDON.

On a late visit to Covent-garden Market, where I arrived at the dawn of day in the month of April, amid the confused hubbub and monotonous din of the busy population, my attention was arrested by the tall and weather-beaten figure of a hoary-headed man, who leaned patiently against one of the square pillars of the piazza. Though he was not exactly "the oldest man that ever wore grey hairs," he had plainly long outlived the threescore and ten years assigned by the Psalmist as the usual limits of mortal existence. Though but a few white locks clustered sparingly around his bald forehead, yet his frame was not bowed by a long life of labour, nor the fire of his eye grown dim: the brown hue of health yet mantled in his furrowed cheek, upon which dwelt the expression of patriarchal tranquillity and repose; and an air of semi-abstraction marked his aspect, as though his thoughts were not altogether centred upon the motley and ever-moving scene around him. He stood in simple and quiet dignity, presiding over a large basket of buttercups—early buttercups, which, yet moist with the sparkling dews of night, he had gathered in the fields or hedge-rows, and brought upon his back to the market for sale.

"Strange merchandise!" thought I to myself. "Buttercups! who will be likely to buy buttercups, which anybody may go and gather for nothing in the fields? Surely the old

man must be in his dotage!" And I passed on, not without a feeling of compassion for the simplicity of a man of his years, who could imagine that he would find a market for buttercups in the very centre of civilization and refinement. There was something, however, in the vivid flash of the old man's eye, as his glance met mine for a moment — and it may well be that there was something in the dewy golden bowls of the buttercups too — which impressed the spectacle he presented upon my memory after I had turned away, and brought him at intervals again and again before my mind's eye.

As I strolled pleasantly among the floral beauties of the parterre and the hothouse — the graceful arums, the delicate and fragile monthly roses, the modest and luxuriant pansies, and the brilliant exotics, which even in early spring render Covent-garden the paradise of commerce, the images of the buttercups and their grey-haired guardian recurred many times, and ever with added force, to my imagination. By-and-by I began to doubt whether I had not done the old man an injustice in the estimate I had formed of him — whether, in fact, I was not myself the simpleton, and he the wiser man of the two. "Buttercups!" I again mentally ejaculated, "what are the associations connected with them, and what are the images they present to the Londoner pent up in the murky wilderness of brick? Is not the buttercup the first flower plucked by infant hands from the green bosom of bountiful mother earth? Are not the sweet memories of infancy and childhood, which are the purest poetry of man's troubled life, all floating magically in its little golden cup? Who does not remember — and who, remembering, would willingly forget? — his first ecstatic rambles in the yellow fields — yellow with buttercups, when he pulled the nodding flowers, and held the gleaming calyx beneath his little sister's chin, enraptured at the ruddy reflection from the flower; and then, with look demure and solemn, submitted his own face to the same mysterious experiment? Who does not remember the ravage

he committed in the golden meadows, while he was yet a tottering plaything hardly higher than the tall grass in which he was half-buried, when, had he had but the power, he would have culled every flower of the field, and garnered them up for treasures? And how many thousands and tens of thousands are there among the weary workers of London, to whom these associations are dearer by far than any which could be called into existence by the most rare and gorgeous products of combined art and nature which wealth could procure?

Simpleton that I was—I had set down a profound practical philosopher for a mere dotard. The old man knew the secrets of the human heart better than I did. He was well aware that to the industrious country-bred mechanic, caged, perhaps for life, in the stony prison of the metropolis, the simple flower which brought once more within his dark and smoky dwelling the scenes and memories of infancy, would present attractions to which a penny would be light indeed in the balance; and that he should therefore find patrons and purchasers, as long as he could meet with men who had hearts in their bosoms and a few penny-pieces in their pockets.

These were my speculations; and having now completely altered my opinion of the buttercup-merchant, I resolved, before I left the market, to see the patriarch again, in order to ascertain, if possible, whether I had at length come to a right conclusion with regard to him. A couple of hours had elapsed ere I returned to the spot where I had first seen him. He had not deserted his post. The sun had risen high, and was shining warmly upon his brown face, now animated with a look of joyous satisfaction, which I attributed to the success of his morning's speculation. His basket—an old wine hamper cut down—was empty, and he held out the last bunch of buttercups in his hand, and proffered them to me, having sold, he said, "three score odd" that morning.

Whether I bought the last bunch of buttercups it imports

the reader nothing to know. I must confess to an affection — whether it be disease or not, let the nosologists declare — which conjures up visions of hedge-rows sparkling with blossoms, and of embowering shadowy lanes, through gaps in which the green fields glimmer brightly. This affection, when an attack of it comes on, sometimes leads me to do odd things — things far more strange than lugging home a bunch of buttercups half as big as my head. Still I am not going to confess. I do declare, however, that I was not sorry to find that there were so many simpletons to be met with in London, before seven o'clock in the morning, as to buy up half a hundred weight of buttercups at a penny a bunch. Among so many sharp fellows who speculate upon the animal appetites, the vices, and the sordid propensities of mankind, it was refreshing to find one who, like the purveyor of buttercups, founded his claim to remuneration upon the indwelling poetry of human nature, and the love of natural beauties which survives in so many persons, debased and tainted and corrupt though they be by temptation and by sin.

THE STREET STATIONER.

THE profession of street stationer is one of comparative novelty, and cannot be traced so far back as the advent of Rowland Hill with his famous system of penny postage, which has proved such a bonus to the nation, and has already gone far to add another generic designation to the *genus homo*, who being once described as a cooking animal, may now with nearly equal propriety be styled a "corresponding" one. It was the increase of correspondence, consequent upon the establishment and success of the penny postage, and no other cause, that called the street stationer into existence, and located him with his back to the carriage-way and his feet to the kerb-stone, and set him chanting, in a monotonous voice, "Here you are, ladies and gen'lmen—best Bath note-paper a penny for a 'ole half quire—hangflups three-halfpence a packet, an' sealin'-vax a penny a stick."

This out-of-door trader is generally a shabby and rather broken-down specimen of the low-class man-about-town, who has lingered and idled and dawdled and hesitated so long in the choice of a profession, that it is at length too late to make his selection. He has been driven to exertion to satisfy the wants of nature, and being constitutionally averse, as well to the discipline as the toil of regular labour, he has contrived to invest a small capital in a species of property conveniently portable, and thrown himself upon the patronage of the pub-

lic, to whose epistolary wants he dedicates his compelled energies. This is all very well so far as it goes; and we might congratulate him, and the community he assumes to serve, upon his having at length condescended to get his own living in any lawful way, were it not for the fact, that the species of industry he has adopted is palpably open to the charge of deception and predacity. It happens to be the case that, owing to some cause or other very intimately connected with the subject of popular education, not one in twenty of that class of the London industrials who, when they correspond at all, may be said to correspond from hand to mouth, and who only purchase stationery when they want to write a letter, know how many sheets of paper go to a quire. Of this state of ignorance the street stationer takes a professional advantage, and sells his confiding customers eight sheets instead of twelve, under the denomination of "a 'ole half quire." As he himself gives eightpence for five quires, to sell at a penny the half quire would yield him a profit less remunerative than he would relish, and one which perhaps he would consider not worth the trouble attending the sale: so he divides his quire, as the Irishman divided his cheese, into *three* halves, and thus realizes a profit of nearly ninety per cent., three-fourths of which is due to the ignorance of his patrons. His "hangflups," as he calls his envelopes, are subjected to a similar process of expansion, though they are not susceptible, by any species of management, of such a profitable transformation as that effected by bisecting a quire of paper in the mode above described. Of these, however, he makes five quarters to the hundred, which after all pays handsomely for the trouble of the division.

Unlike other street traders, who carry a portable stock, and wander where they choose at their own sweet will, the stationer of the flag-stones finds it as much to his convenience as to his interest to confine himself to one locality. Stationery, which derives its designation from being sold by persons

who occupied stations, in contradistinction to travelling hawkers and pedlars — and which was originally and properly spelled stationary — would appear to be a species of merchandise the sale of which naturally attracts and cultivates a connection; and hence it follows that the longer a man remains in one place, where the public know where to find him, the more he sells, and the more he is likely to sell. This, of course, is one reason why the subject of the present sketch is found in full voice — though not in full quire — from week to week, and from month to month, chanting his delusive notes in the self-same spot. Another reason, and one which must have considerable weight in determining his choice of a position, will be found in the damageable nature of the commodities in which he deals. He cannot afford to be caught in a heavy shower: water would be almost as fatal as ink to the delicate gloss of his note-paper; and his "hangflups," which wear a very livid appearance, and are but sickly to look at, would dissolve into pulp under the pressure of the hydropathic treatment, in the shape of a summer storm. Hence he takes up his stand within a very short distance of some convenient shelter, to which he can repair when a lowering cloud threatens to moisten his merchandise. Whenever you see him harnessed with his little tray, fluttering his pretended half-quire in the faces of the passers-by, and hear him pattering his never-ending strain in their ears, you may be sure that not far off, in some direction or other, there is a dry archway, a covered court, or some roomy shelter, where, in company with the umbrellaless crowd, he can take his stand in less than a minute, should it come on to rain; and where, too, he has an opportunity of prosecuting his commerce among a large party whom the shower has brought into temporary companionship.

It is but fair to state that some of the members of this fraternity approximate rather nearer than the majority of them do to a just conception of what is due to the purchaser of a

half-quire of paper, and give him *nine* sheets for his penny. This is a step in the right direction; and we are sorry that at present we can report no further improvement, and that even this small instalment of justice is but partially practised. We made the experiment of buying at two or three locations very lately, and in no case obtained more than nine sheets for the price of twelve. Now here is a chance for some enterprising genius, if such a character is to be found among all the street stationers, to stand forth manfully in the cause of honesty, and to earn a character by dispelling the popular hallucination on the subject of a quire of paper, in awarding his customers the right number of sheets for their money. We venture to predict that the first man among them who shall do this will find his account in it, and realize, through "small profits and quick returns," a larger weekly income than he has averaged hitherto by defrauding his patrons to the tune of thirty per cent. We promise him moreover that, clever as it may be thought to trick the multitude, and sweet as stolen waters are, he shall find that the practice of integrity is a policy incomparably more profitable, and the crust purchased by an honest penny infinitely more sweet and wholesome.

WHAT HAS BECOME OF THE PIEMAN?

A PENNY for a pie! In the records of our individual experience, this is probably the most ancient species of barter—the first gentle and welcome induction to the dry details of commerce, and one eminently calculated to impress upon the infant minds of a trading population the primary principles of exchange, of which a *quid pro quo* forms the universal basis. We had imagined, upon the first view of our subject, that the fabrication and consumption of pies must have been a custom as ancient as cookery itself, and have ranked among the very first achievements of the gastronomic art. Upon careful investigation, however, we find ourselves to have been mistaken in this idea. We have not been able to discover among the revelations to which the Rosetta Stone surrendered a key, any authority for supposing that among all the butlers and bakers of all the Pharaohs, there ever existed one who knew how to prepare a pie for the royal banquet. No; it was reserved for the Greeks, the masters of civilization and the demigods of art, who brought every species of refinement to its highest pitch, to add the invention of pies and pie-crust to the catalogue of their immortal triumphs. Their ἀρτόκρεας (the word passed unchanged into Roman use) was an aggregation of succulent meats baked in a farinaceous crust, probably somewhat resembling in form a venison pasty of the present day, and was the first combination of the kind, so far at least as we

know, ever submitted to the appetite of the gourmand. We have no intention of pursuing the history of this great discovery from its first dawn in some Athenian kitchen to its present universal estimation among all civilized eaters. We must pass the pies of all nations, from the monkey-pie of Central Africa, with the head of the baked semi-homo emerging spectrally from the upper-crust, to the *patés* of Strasburg, the abnormally swollen livers of whose tormented geese roam the wide world to avenge upon gluttonous man the infamous tortures inflicted upon their original proprietors: we must pass, too, the thousand-and-one ingenious inventions which adorn the pages of Messrs. Glass and Rumbold, by means of which dyspepsias are produced *secundum artem*, and the valetudinarian is accustomed to retard his convalescence according to the most approved and fashionable mode. The great pie of 1850, prepared by the ingenious Soyer, at the cost of a hundred guineas, for the especial delectation of municipal stomachs at York, is, likewise, altogether out of our way. Our business is with the pie that is sold for a penny, and sold in London. Let us add, moreover, that we treat only of the pie which is fairly worth a penny, leaving altogether out of our category the flimsy sophistries of your professed confectioner.

From time immemorial the wandering pieman was a prominent character in the highways and byways of London. He was generally a merry dog, and was always found where merriment was going on. Furnished with a tray about a yard square, either carried upon his head or suspended by a strap in front of his breast, he scrupled not to force his way through the thickest crowd, knowing that the very centre of action was the best market for his wares. He was a gambler, both from inclination and principle, and would toss with his customers, either by the dallying shilli-shally process of "best five in nine," the tricksy manœuvre of "best two in three," or the desperate dash of "sudden death!" in which latter case the first toss was destiny—a pie for a halfpenny, or your half-

penny gone for nothing; but he invariably declined the mysterious process of "the odd man;" not being altogether free from suspicion on the subject of collusion between a couple of hungry customers. We meet with him frequently in old prints; and in Hogarth's "March to Finchley," there he stands in the very centre of the crowd, grinning with delight at the adroitness of one robbery, while he is himself the victim of another. We learn from this admirable figure by the greatest painter of English life, that the pieman of the last century perambulated the streets in professional costume; and we gather further, from the burly dimensions of his wares, that he kept his trade alive by the laudable practice of giving "a good pennyworth for a penny." Justice compels us to observe that his successors of a later generation have not been very conscientious observers of this maxim. The varying price of flour, alternating with a sliding-scale, probably drove some of them to their wit's end; and perhaps this cause more than any other operated in imparting that complexion to their productions which made them resemble the dead body of a penny pie, and which in due time lost them favour with the discerning portion of their customers. Certain it is that the perambulating pie business in London fell very much into disrepute and contempt for several years before the abolition of the corn-laws and the advent of free trade. Opprobrious epithets were hurled at the wandering merchant as he paraded the streets and alleys—epithets which were in no small degree justified by the clammy and clay-like appearance of his goods. By degrees the profession got into disfavour, and the pieman either altogether disappeared, or merged in a dealer in foreign nuts, fruits, and other edibles which barred the suspicion of sophistication.

Still the relish for pies survived in the public taste, and the willing penny was as ready as ever to guerdon the man who, on fair grounds, would meet the general desire. No sooner, therefore, was the sliding-scale gone to the dogs, and a fair

prospect of permanence offered to the speculator, in the guarantee of something like a fixed cost in the chief ingredient used, than up sprung almost simultaneously in every district of the metropolis a new description of pie-shops, which rushed at once into popularity and prosperity. Capital had recognised the leading want of the age, and brought the appliances of wealth and energy to supply it. Avoiding, on the one hand, the glitter and pretension of the confectioner, and on the other the employment of adulterating or inferior materials, they produced an article which the populace devoured with universal commendation, to the gradual but certain profit of the projectors. The peripatetic merchant was pretty generally driven out of the field by the superiority of the delicacy with which he had to compete. He could not manufacture on a small scale in a style to rival his new antagonists, and he could not purchase of them to sell again, because they would not allow him a living margin—boasting, as it would appear with perfect truth, that they sold at a small and infinitesimal profit, which would not bear division.

These penny-pie shops now form one of the characteristic features of the London trade in comestibles. That they are an immense convenience as well as a luxury to a very large section of the population, there can be no doubt. It might be imagined, at first view, that they would naturally seek a cheap locality and a low rental. This, however, is by no means the universal practice. In some of the chief lines of route they are to be found in full operation; and it is rare indeed, unless at seasons when the weather is very unfavourable, that they are not seen well filled with customers. They abound especially in the immediate neighbourhood of omnibus and cab stations, and very much in the thoroughfares and short-cuts most frequented by the middle and lower classes. But though the window may be of plate-glass, behind which piles of the finest fruit, joints, and quarters of the best meat, a large dish of silver eels, and a portly china bowl charged

with a liberal heap of minced-meat, with here and there a few pies, lie temptingly arranged upon napkins of snowy whiteness, yet there is not a chair, stool, or seat of any kind to be found within. No dallying is looked for, nor would it probably be allowed. "Pay for your pie, and go," seems the order of the day. True, you may eat it there, as thousands do; but you must eat it standing, and clear of the counter. We have more than once witnessed this interesting operation with mingled mirth and satisfaction; nay, what do we care? —take the confession for what it is worth—*pars ipsi fuimus* —we have eaten our pies (and paid for them too, no credit being given)—*in loco*, and are therefore in a condition to guarantee the truth of what we record. With few exceptions (we include ourselves among the number), there are no theoretical philosophers among the frequenters of the penny-pie shop. The philosophy of bun-eating may be very profound, and may present, as we think it does, some difficult points; but the philosophy of penny-pie eating is absolutely next to *nil*. The customer of the pie-shop is a man (if he is not a boy) with whom a penny is a penny, and a pie is a pie, who, when he has the former to spend or the latter to eat, goes through the ceremony like one impressed with the settled conviction that he has business in hand which it behoves him to attend to. Look at him as he stands in the centre of the floor, erect as a grenadier, turning his busy mouth full upon the living tide that rushes along Holborn! Of shame or confusion of face in connection with the enviable position in which he stands he has not the remotest conception, and could as soon be brought to comprehend the *differential calculus* as to entertain a thought of it. What, we ask, would philosophy do for him? Still every customer is not so happily organised, and so blissfully insensible to the attacks of false shame; and for such as are unprepared for the public gaze, or constitutionally averse from it, a benevolent provision is made by a score of old play-bills stuck against the adverse wall, or

swathing the sacks of flour which stand ready for use, and which they may peruse, or affect to peruse, in silence, munching their pennyworths the while. The main body of the pie-eaters are, however, perfectly at their ease, and pass the very few minutes necessary for the discussion of their purchases in bandying compliments with three or four good-looking lasses, the very incarnations of good-temper and cleanly tidiness, who from morn to night are as busy as bees in extricating the pies from their metallic moulds, as they are demanded by the customers. These assistants lead no lazy life, but they are without exception plump and healthy-looking, and would seem (if we are to believe the report of an employer) to have an astonishing tendency to the parish church of the district in which they officiate, our informant having been bereaved of three by marriage in the short space of six months. Relays are necessary in most establishments on the main routes, as the shops are open all night long, seldom closing much before three in the morning when situated in the neighbourhood of a theatre or a cab-stand. Of the amount of business done in the course of a year it is not easy to form an estimate. Some pie-houses are known to consume as much flour as a neighbouring baker standing in the same track. The baker makes ninety quartern loaves from the sack of flour, and could hardly make a living upon less than a dozen sacks a week; but as the proportion borne by the crust of a penny-pie to a quartern loaf is a mystery which we have not yet succeeded in penetrating, we are wanting in the elements of an exact calculation.

The establishment of these shops has by degrees prodigiously increased the number of pie-eaters and the consumption of pies. Thousands and tens of thousands who would decline the handling of a scalding hot morsel in the public street, will yet steal to the corner of a shop, and in front of an old play-bill, delicately dandling the titbit on their finger-tips till it cools to the precise temperature at which it is so

delicious to swallow—"snatch a fearful joy." The tradesman, too, in the immediate vicinity, soon learns to appreciate the propinquity of the pie-shop, in the addition it furnishes to a cold dinner, and for half the sum it would have cost him if prepared in his own kitchen. Many a time and oft have we dropped in, upon the strength of a general invitation, at the dinner-table of an indulgent bibliopole, and recognised the undeniable *patés* of "over the way" following upon the heels of the cold sirloin. With artisans out of work, and with town-travellers of small trade, the pie-shop is a halting-place, its productions presenting a cheap substitute for a dinner. Few purchases are made before twelve o'clock in the day; in fact the shutters are rarely pulled down much before eleven; yet even then business is carried on for nearly twenty hours out of the twenty-four. About noon the current of custom sets in, and all hands are busy till four or five o'clock; after which there is a pause, or rather a relaxation, until evening, when the various bands of operatives, as they are successively released from work, again renew the tide. As these disappear, the numberless nightly exhibitions, lecture-rooms, mechanics' institutes, concerts, theatres and casinos, pour forth their motley hordes, of whom a large and hungry section find their way to the pie-house as the only available resource—the public-houses being shut up for the night, and the lobster-rooms, oyster saloons, "shades," "coal-holes," and "cider-cellars," too expensive for the means of the multitude. After these come the cab-drivers, who, having conveyed to their homes the more moneyed classes of sight-seers and playgoers, return to their stands in the vicinity of the shop, and now consider that they may conscientiously indulge in a refreshment of eel-pies, winding up with a couple of "fruiters," to the amount at least of the sum of which they may have been able to cheat their fares.

Throughout the summer months the pie trade flourishes with unabated vigour. Each successive fruit, as it ripens and

comes to market, adds a fresh impetus to the traffic. As autumn waxes, every week supplies a new attraction and a delicious variety; as it wanes into winter, good store of apples are laid up for future use; and so soon as Jack Frost sets his cold toes upon the pavement, the delicate odour of mince-meat assails the passer-by, and reminds him that Christmas is coming, and that the pieman is ready for him. It is only in the early spring that the pie-shop is under a temporary cloud. The apples of the past year are well nigh gone, and the few that remain have lost their succulence, and are dry and flavourless. This is the precise season when, as the pieman in "Pickwick" too candidly observed, "fruits is out, and cats is in." Now there is an unaccountable prejudice against cats among the pie-devouring population of the metropolis; we are superior to it ourselves, and can therefore afford to mention it dispassionately, and to express our regret that any species of commerce, much more one so grateful to the palate, and so convenient to the purse, should periodically suffer declension through the prevalence of an unfounded prejudice. Certain it is that penny-pie eating does materially decline about the early spring season; and it is certain too that, of late years, about the same season, a succession of fine Tabbies of our own have mysteriously disappeared. Attempts are made with rhubarb to combat the depression of business; but success in this matter is very partial—the generality of consumers being impressed with the popular notion that rhubarb is physic, and that physic is not fruit. But relief is at hand; the showers and sunshine of May bring the gooseberry to market; pies resume their importance; and the pieman, backed by an inexhaustible store of a fruit grateful to every English palate, commences the campaign with renewed energy, and bids defiance for the rest of the year to the mutations of fortune.

We shall close this sketch with a legend of the day, for the truth of which, however, we do not personally vouch. It

was related and received with much gusto at an annual supper lately given by a large pie proprietor to his assembled hands:—

Some time since, so runs the current narrative, the owner of a thriving mutton-pie concern, which, after much difficulty, he had succeeded in establishing with borrowed capital, died before he had well extricated himself from the responsibilities of debt. The widow carried on the business after his decease, and throve so well, that a speculating baker on the opposite side of the way made her the offer of his hand. The lady refused, and the enraged suitor, determined on revenge, immediately converted his baking into an opposition pie-shop; and acting on the principle universal among London bakers, of doing business for the first month or two at a loss, made his pies twice as big as he could honestly afford to make them. The consequence was that the widow lost her custom, and was hastening fast to ruin, when a friend of her late husband, who was also a small creditor, paid her a visit. She detailed her grievance to him, and lamented her lost trade and fearful prospects. "Ho, ho!" said her friend, "that 'ere's the move, is it? Never you mind, my dear. If I don't git your trade agin, there aint no snakes, mark me—that's all!" So saying he took his leave.

About eight o'clock the same evening, when the baker's new pie-shop was crammed to overflowing, and the principal was below superintending the production of a new batch, in walks the widow's friend in the costume of a kennel-raker, and elbowing his way to the counter, dabs down upon it a brace of huge dead cats, vociferating at the same time to the astonished damsel in attendance; "Tell your master, my dear, as how them two makes six-and-thirty this week, and say I'll bring t'other four to-morrer arternoon!" With that he swaggered out and went his way. So powerful was the prejudice against cat-mutton among the population of that neighbourhood, that the shop was clear in an instant, and

the floor was seen covered with hastily-abandoned specimens of every variety of segments of a circle. The spirit-shop at the corner of the street experienced an unusually large demand for "goes" of brandy, and interjectional ejaculations not purely grammatical were not merely audible, but visible too in the district. It is averred that the ingenious expedient of the widow's friend, founded as it was upon a profound knowledge of human prejudices, had the desired effect of restoring "the balance of trade." The widow recovered her commerce; the resentful baker was done as brown as if he had been shut up in his own oven; and the friend who brought about this measure of justice received the hand of the lady as a reward for his interference.

BLIGHTED FLOWERS.

THE facts of the following brief narrative, which are very few and of but melancholy interest, became known to me in the precise order in which they are laid before the reader. They were forced upon my observation rather than sought out by me; and they present, to my mind at least, a touching picture of the bitter conflict industrious poverty is sometimes called upon to wage with "the thousand natural shocks which flesh is heir to."

It must be now eight or nine years since, in traversing a certain street, which runs for nearly half a mile in a direct line southward, I first encountered Ellen ——. She was then a fair young girl of seventeen, rather above the middle size, and with a queen-like air and gait which made her appear taller than she really was. Her countenance, pale but healthy, and of a perfectly regular and classic mould, was charming to look upon from its undefinable expression of lovableness and sweet temper. Her tiny feet tripped noiselessly along the pavement, and a glance from her black eye sometimes met mine like a ray of light, as, punctually at twenty minutes to nine, we passed each other near —— House, each of us on our way to the theatre of our daily operations. She was an embroideress, as I soon discovered from a small stretching-frame, containing some unfinished work, which she occasionally carried in her hand. She set me a worthy example of punctuality,

and I could any day have told the time to a minute without looking at my watch, by marking the spot where we passed each other. I learned to look for her regularly, and before I knew her name, had given her that of "Minerva," in acknowledgment of her efficiency as a Mentor.

A year after the commencement of our acquaintance, which never ripened into speech, happening to set out from home one morning a quarter of an hour before my usual time, I made the pleasing discovery that my juvenile Minerva had a younger sister, if possible still more beautiful than herself. The pair were taking an affectionate leave of each other at the crossing of the New Road, and the silver accents of the younger as, kissing her sister, she laughed out, "Good-by, Ellen," gave me the first information of the real name of my pretty Mentor. The little Mary—for so was the younger called, who could not be more than eleven years of age—was a slender, frolicsome sylph, with a skin of the purest carnation, and a face like that of Sir Joshua's seraph in the National Gallery, but with larger orbs and longer lashes shading them. As she danced and leaped before me on her way home again, I could not but admire the natural ease and grace of every motion, nor fail to comprehend and sympathise with the anxious looks of the sisters' only parent, their widowed mother, who stood watching the return of the younger darling at the door of a very humble two-story dwelling, in the vicinity of the New River Head.

Nearly two years passed away, during which, with the exception of Sundays and holidays, every recurring morning brought me the grateful though momentary vision of one or both of the charming sisters. Then came an additional pleasure —I met them both together every day. The younger had commenced practising the same delicate and ingenious craft of embroidery, and the two pursued their industry in company under the same employer. It was amusing to mark the demure assumption of womanhood darkening the brows of the aerial little sprite, as, with all the new-born consequence of

responsibility, she walked soberly by her sister's side, frame in hand, and occasionally revealed to passers-by a brief glimpse of her many-coloured handiwork. They were the very picture of beauty and happiness, and happy beyond question must their innocent lives have been for many pleasant months. But soon the shadows of care began to steal over their hitherto joyous faces, and traces of anxiety, perhaps of tears, to be too plainly visible on their paling cheeks. All at once I missed them in my morning's walk, and for several days—it might be weeks—saw nothing of them. I was at length startled from my forgetfulness of their very existence by the sudden apparition of both one Monday morning clad in the deepest mourning. I saw the truth at once; the mother, who, I had remarked, was prematurely old and feeble, was gone, and the two orphan children were left to battle it with the world. My conjecture was the truth, as a neighbour of whom I made some inquiries on the subject was not slow to inform me. "Ah, sir," said the good woman, "poor Mrs. D—— have had a hard time of it, and she born an' bred a gentlewoman."

I asked her if the daughters were provided for.

"Indeed, sir," continued my informant, "I'm afeard not. 'Twas the most unfortnatest thing in the world, sir, poor Mr. D——'s dying jest as a' did. You see, sir, he war a soldier, a fightin' out in Indy, and his poor wife lef at home wi' them two blossoms o' gals. He warn't what you call a common soldier, sir, but some kind o' officer like; an' in some great battle fought seven year agone he done fine service I've heerd, and promotion was sent out to 'un, but didn't get there till the poor man was dead of his wounds. The news of he's death cut up his poor wife complete, and she han't been herself since. I've know'd she wasn't long for here ever since it come. Wust of all, it seems that because the poor man was dead the very day the promotion reached 'un, a' didn't die a captain after all, and so the poor widder didn't get no pension. How they've a' managed to live is more than I can tell. The oldest gal is very

clever, they say; but Lor' bless 'ee! 'taint much to s'port three as is to be got out o' broiderin'."

Thus enlightened on the subject of their private history, it was with very different feelings I afterwards regarded these unfortunate children. Bereft of both parents, and cast upon a world with the ways of which they were utterly unacquainted, and in which they might be doomed to the most painful struggles, even to procure a bare subsistence, one treasure was yet left them—it was the treasure of each other's love. So far as the depth of this feeling could be estimated from the looks and actions of both, it was all in all to each. But the sacred bond that bound them was destined to be rudely rent asunder. The cold winds of autumn began to visit too roughly the fair pale face of the younger girl, and the unmistakeable indications of consumption made their appearance: the harrassing cough, the hectic cheek, the deep-settled pain in the side, the failing breath. Against these dread forerunners it was vain long to contend; and the poor child had to remain at home in her solitary sick-chamber, while the loving sister toiled harder than ever to provide, if possible, the means of comfort and restoration to health. All the world knows the ending of such a hopeless strife as this. It is sometimes the will of heaven that the path of virtue, like that of glory, leads but to the grave. So it was in the present instance: the blossom of this fair young life withered away, and the grass-fringed lips of the child's early tomb closed over the lifeless relics ere spring had dawned upon the year.

Sorrow had graven legible traces upon the brow of my hapless Mentor when I saw her again. How different now was the vision that greeted my daily sight from that of former years! The want that admits not of idle wailing compelled her still to pursue her daily course of labour, and she pursued it with the same constancy and punctuality as she had ever done. But the exquisitely chiselled face, the majestic gait, the elastic step—the beauty and glory of youth, unshaken

because unassaulted by death and sorrow—where were they? Alas! all the bewitching charms of her former being had gone down into the grave of her mother and sister; and she, their support and idol, seemed no more now than she really was—a wayworn, solitary, and isolated struggler for daily bread.

Were this a fiction that I am writing, it would be an easy matter to deal out a measure of poetical justice, and to recompense poor Ellen for all her industry, self-denial, and suffering in the arms of a husband, who should possess as many and great virtues as herself, and an ample fortune to boot. I wish with all my heart that it were a fiction, and that Providence had never furnished me with such a seeming anomaly to add to the list of my desultory chronicles. But I am telling a true story of a life. Ellen found no mate. No mate, did I say? Yes, one: the same grim yoke-fellow whose delight it is to "gather roses in the spring," paid ghastly court to her faded charms, and won her—who shall say an unwilling bride? I could see his gradual but deadly advances in my daily walks: the same indications that gave warning of the sister's fate admonished me that she also was on her way to the tomb, and that the place that had known her would soon know her no more. She grew day by day more feeble; and one morning I found her seated on the step of a door, unable to proceed. After that she disappeared from my view; and though I never saw her again at the old spot, I have seldom passed that spot since, though for many years following the same route, without recognising again in my mind's eye the graceful form and angel aspect of Ellen D——.

"And is this the end of your mournful history?" some querulous reader demands. Not quite. There is a soul of good in things evil. Compassion dwells with the depths of misery; and in the valley of the shadow of death dove-eyed Charity walks with shining wings. . . . . It was nearly two months after I had lost sight of poor Ellen, that during

one of my dinner-hour perambulations about town, I looked in almost accidentally upon my old friend and chum, Jack W——. Jack keeps a perfumer's shop not a hundred miles from Gray's Inn, where, ensconced up to his eyes in delicate odours, he passes his leisure hours—the hours when commerce flags, and people have more pressing affairs to attend to than the delectation of their nostrils—in the enthusiastic study of art and *vertu*. His shop is hardly more crammed with bottles and attar, soaps, scents, and all the *etceteras* of the toilet, than the rest of his house with prints, pictures, carvings, and curiosities of every sort. Jack and I went to school together, and sowed our slender crop of wild oats together; and, indeed, in some sort have been together ever since. We both have our own collections of rarities, such as they are, and each criticises the other's new purchases. On the present occasion there was a new Van Somebody's old painting awaiting my judgment; and no sooner did my shadow darken his door, than starting from his lair, and bidding the boy ring the bell should he be wanted, he bustled me upstairs, calling by the way to his housekeeper, Mrs. Jones—Jack is a bachelor—to bring up coffee for two. I was prepared to pronounce my dictum on his newly-acquired treasure, and was going to bounce unceremoniously into the old lumber-room over the lobby to regale my sight with the delightful confusion of his unarranged accumulations when he pulled me forcibly back by the coat-tail. "Not there," said Jack; "you can't go there. Go into my snuggery."

"And why not there?" said I; jealous of some new purchase which I was not to see.

"Because there's somebody ill there—it is a bedroom now: a poor girl; she wanted a place to die in, poor thing; and I put her in there."

"Who is she?—a relative?"

"No; I never saw her till Monday last. Sit down, I'll tell you how it was. Set down the coffee, Mrs. Jones, and

just look in upon the patient, will you? Sugar and cream? You know my weakness for the dead wall in Lincoln's Inn Fields." (Jack never refuses a beggar backed by that wall, for the love of Ben Jonson, who, he devoutly believes, had a hand in building it.) "Well, I met with her there on Monday last. She asked for nothing, but held out her hand, and as she did so the tears streamed from her eyes on the pavement. The poor creature, it was plain enough, was then dying; and I told her so. She said she knew it, but had no place to die in but the parish workhouse, and hoped that I would not send her there. What's the use of talking? I brought her here, and put her to sleep on the sofa, while Jones cleared out the lumber-room and got up a bed. I sent for Dr. H—— to look at her; he gave her a week or ten days at the farthest: I don't think she'll last so long. The curate of St. —— comes every day to see her, and I like to talk to her myself sometimes. Well, Mrs. Jones, how goes she on?"

"She's asleep," said the housekeeper. "Would you like to look at her, gentlemen?"

We entered the room together, It was as some unaccountable presentiment had forewarned me: there, upon a snow-white sheet, and pillowed by my friend's favourite eider-down squab, lay the wasted form of Ellen D——. She slept soundly and breathed loudly; and Dr. H——, who entered while we stood at the bedside, informed us that in all probability she would awake only to die, or if to sleep again then to wake no more. The latter was the true propheey. She awoke an hour or two after my departure, and passed away that same night in a quiet slumber without a pang.

I never learned by what chain of circumstances she was driven to seek alms in the public streets. I might have done so perhaps by inquiry, but to what purpose? She died in peace, with friendly hands and friendly hearts near her, and Jack buried her in his own grave in Highgate Cemetery, at his own expense; and declares he is none the worse for it. I am of his opinion.

THE DEPLORABLE DODGE.

CURLED up under the shelter of one of the numerous dead walls to be met with in the line of the New Road, from Paddington to King's Cross, there is to be occasionally seen a lump of unwashed and unkempt shivering juvenility and tattered raggedness. A coarse canvas suit, which would not fetch two-pence at the rag shop, and which is full of holes and rents, does not more than half cover the naked limbs; the unclean skin, "goose-fleshed" with the wintry blast of February, looks pallidly through a dozen patchwork apertures. His bare head is protected from the sun and rain only by a mass of tangled and dishevelled hair, which drips like thatch when the rain beats over it. The owner of the miserable garments, which barely serve the purposes of decency, can boast of neither shirt, nor stockings, nor shoes. He has huddled himself up almost to the form of a crouching cur that shrinks from the assaults of the storm, and he half hides his face in his hands as he cowers ruefully from the cold. On the shin of one leg, too, a little above the ankle, there is a bad, unsightly wound. On a smooth pavement stone at his side, first industriously cleaned and polished with the palm of his hand, he has written in white chalk, shaded with a black Italian crayon, and in characters to the beauty and flourishing fluency

of which the italics we are compelled to make use of have no pretensions, the following expressive appeal: —

> "*I will not steal—*
> *I must not beg—*
> *I cannot work—*
> *Will you allow me to starve?*"

A crowd of gaping boys and compassionating females have gathered round him. The boys are unanimous and loud in their praise of the marvellous writing, which in a measure justifies their assertion that it is "better than copper-plate;" the women, with sundry ejaculations of pity and condolence, mingled with violent indignation against the world of wealth for not stepping forth in a body to the rescue, are searching in their pockets for an alms for the suffering creature. Now and then a passing pedestrian throws him a coin and hurries on; and now, the poor women, having succeeded in extracting a few half-pence from the recesses of their pockets and clubbed them together, one of them stoops down tenderly, and, with a sigh and a blessing, confers upon the starving wretch their united contribution. The grateful creature turns a tearful eye to the clouds, and, impressed with the burden of thankfulness, invokes a thousand benedictions upon their charitable hearts. Sober citizens, not altogether free from suspicion, walk past quietly, and take no notice of the appeal to their sympathies; while the man of the world, conversant with the whole economy of the business, hurls him an admonition or a reproach, instead of a coin, by which proceeding the deplorable object in all probability profits more than he would have done by their pence, through the generosity of the ignorant and the charitable, which is always stimulated by the appearance of inhumanity or oppression.

This unfortunate outcast crouches all day in the eye of the public; and if his wants be still unsatisfied, he lights a can-

dle so soon as it is dark, and then presents quite a picturesque object. By the light of his guttering tallow, those who pass may read his lithographic performance; and he will remain at his post till seven o'clock at least, to catch the commercial gentlemen on their return home after the labours of the counting-house. So soon as that daily current has subsided, considering his business done for the day, he rises from his lair, and, treading out his ornamental inscription with his foot, limps away with the gait of a confirmed and incurable cripple from the scene of his labours—if labours they are to be called.

The subject whom we have been rapidly contemplating is well known in certain localities as an arrant impostor. We have seen him in the exercise of his daily profession, or we should say *one* of his professions—that of "The Deplorable Object," in the pursuit of which he enjoys a reputation, and a profit, too, equal to those of any of his tribe. It may be as well, perhaps, to look at the other side of the picture, and see how he indemnifies himself at night for his couch of cold stone during eight or nine hours of the day. Let us follow him home. He has blown out his candle and hidden it in a hole in the wall above his head, where he will find it again whenever it may be convenient to repeat his performance. He hobbles on painfully for a few hundred yards, when, turning suddenly southwards, he sets his face towards Westminster, and breaks into a strapping pace, which will carry him thither in five-and-thirty minutes. He stops, after a smart walk of a few hundred yards, under the shadow of a doorway, and putting his wounded foot upon the step, carefully detaches the wound—which is a clever work of art—from his leg, and as it cost him three-and-sixpence, he folds it up for future use. He now resumes his pace, nor stops again till, after threading numberless windings and short cuts, he pulls up at a favourite wine-vaults in Seven Dials. Here he

compensates himself for the hardships of his peculiar craft, with libations of some favourite beverage, and afterwards dines as luxuriously as a lord, and at the same hour—as he is wont to boast—at some "ken" in the immediate neighbourhood, in the company of a congenial crew of impostors who, like himself, make a living by preying on the misdirected sympathies of the humane.

What he does with himself after dinner depends entirely upon the state of trade during the day. On this occasion he has been rather successful, and having six or seven shillings in his pocket after his dinner is paid for, he resolves upon a little relaxation. He walks leisurely home to his lodgings, not a very great distance from the Broadway at Westminster, where, doffing his professional garb, he dons one of good serviceable fustian, and, having given a peremptory order for supper at twelve o'clock, makes one in a party for some low theatre in the neighbourhood, where he makes amends for the taciturnity of his performance in the daytime by the volubility of his criticisms. After the performance is over, he and his companions resort to the populous beggars' lodging-house where they all reside, to a midnight supper, made up of the most heterogeneous materials—from charity crusts and potatoes for those who can pay for nothing better, to roast beef, or fowls, or rump steaks and oyster sauce, for those who during the day have reaped the favours of fortune. Supper over, the weary and the penniless slink off to bed, and the rest prolong the repast, in which our hero cuts a conspicuous figure, from the excellence of his voice, the vigour of his lungs, and the comic humour he brings into play, when he favours the company with a specimen of the peculiar class of minstrelsy in which they delight. The doors are closed, and no intrusive policeman presumes to interrupt their harmony, which generally endures so long as anything remains to be spent. If half of the wretched objects finish by disgusting intoxication, they

are but so much the more fitted for business next day, seeing that the tremor and pallor superinduced by debauch may be looked upon as the legitimate qualifications for their line of occupation.

The subject of our notice is really a clever fellow, and his boast, that he "knows a thing or two," is by no means void of truth; but there is one thing which he does not know, and of which at present it would be very difficult to convince him —and that is, that of all the victims of his imposture, he is himself the one most deplorably deluded.

A HALF-PENNYWORTH OF NAVIGATION.

WHO'S for a cheap ride on what a pleasant writer calls the "silent highway?"— silent no longer, since the steamers have taken to plying above Bridge at a charge which has made the surface of the Thames, where it runs through the heart of London, populous with life, and noisy with the clash of paddles and the rush of steam, to say nothing of the incessant chorus of captains, engine-boys, and gangway-men — with their "Ease her," "Stop her," "Back her," "Turn ahead," "Turn astarn," "Now, marm, with the bundle, be alive," "Heave ahead there, will you?" &c., all the day long.

Come this way, my friend; here we are opposite the Adelphi Theatre, and this is the man who used to be a black man, or else it's another, who does duty as talking finger-post, and shows you, if you are a stranger, how you are to get at the half-penny boat. Come, we must dive down this narrow lane, past the "Fox under the Hill," a rather long and not very sightly, cleanly, smooth, or fragrant thoroughfare; and here, in this shed-looking office, you must pay your half-penny, which guarantees you a passage all the way to London Bridge. Look alive! as the money-taker recommends — the *Bee*, you see, is already discharging her living cargo, and others are hurrying on board. The boat wont lose time in turning round — she goes backwards and forwards as straight as a saw, and carries a rudder at her nose as well as one at her tail. Never

mind these jolting planks, you havn't time to tumble down—on with you! That's it: here, on this floating-pier, manufactured from old barges, we may rest a moment, while the boat discharges her freight, and takes on board the return cargo. You see the landing-stage or pier is divided into two equal portions; the people who are leaving the boat have not yet paid their fare; they will have to disburse their coppers at the office where we paid ours, there being but one paying-place for the two termini.

'Tis a motley company, you see, which comes and goes by the half-penny boat. Here is a Temple barrister, with his red-taped brief under his arm, and at his heels follows a plasterer, and a tiler's labourer with a six-foot chimney-pot upon his shoulders. There goes a foreigner — foreigners like to have things cheap — with a bushy black beard and a pale face, moustached and whiskered to the eyes, and puffing a volume of smoke from his invisible mouth; and there is a washerwoman, with a basket of clothes weighing a hundredweight. Yonder young fellow, with the dripping sack on his back, is staggering under a load of oysters from Billingsgate, and he has got to wash them and sell them for three a penny, and see them swallowed one at a time, before his work will be done for the day — and behind him is a comely lassie, with a monster oil-glazed sarcophagus-looking milliner's basket, carrying home a couple of bonnets to a customer. See! there is lame Jack, who sweeps the crossing in the borough, followed by a lady with her "six years' darling of a pigmy size," whom she calls "Little Popps," both hurrying home to dinner after a morning's shopping. All these, and a hundred others of equally varied description, go off on the landing-stage, whence they will have to pay their obolus to the Charon of the Thames ere they are swallowed up in the living tide that rolls along the Strand from morn to night.

Now if we mean to go, we had better get on board, for in another minute the deck will be covered, and we shall not find

room to stand. That's right; make sure of a seat while you may! How they swarm on board, and what a choice sample they present of the mixed multitude of London! The deck is literally jammed with every variety of the pedestrian population — red-breasted soldiers from the barracks, glazed-hatted policemen from the station, Irish labourers and their wives, errand-boys with notes and packages, orange-girls with empty baskets, working-men out for a mouthful of air, and idle boys out for a "spree"— men with burdens to carry, and men with hardly a rag to cover them; unctuous Jews, jabbering Frenchmen, and drowsy-looking Germans — on they flock, squeezing through the gangway, or clambering over the bulwarks, while the little vessel rolls and lurches till the water laves the planks on which you stand. In three minutes from her arrival she has discharged her old cargo, and is crammed to overflowing with a new one. "Back, there: overloaded already!" roars the captain. "Let go; turn ahead; go on!" — and fiz! away we go, leaving full half of the intending voyagers to wait for the next boat, which, however, will not be long in coming.

"Bless me, how we roll about from side to side!" says an anxious old lady. "Is anything the matter with the boat, that it wabbles so?"

"Only a little krank, marm; it's all right," says the person addressed.

"It's all right, of course," says another, glancing at the nervous lady, "whether we goes up or whether we goes down, so long as we gets along. The *Cricket* blowed herself up, and the *Ant* got tired on it, and laid down to rest herself at the bottom t'other day. Howasever, a steamer never blows up nor goes to the bottom but once; and, please God, 't aint goin' to be this time."

While the old lady, unsatisfied with this genuine specimen of Cockney philosophy, is vowing that if she once gets safe on shore she will never again set foot in a half-penny boat, we are already at Waterloo Bridge. Duck goes the funnel, and

we dart under the noble arch, and catch a passing view of Somerset House. The handsome structure runs away in our rear; the Chinese Junk, with its tawdry flags, scuttles after it; we catch a momentary glimpse of Temple Gardens, lying in the sunlight, where half-a-dozen children are playing on the grass; then comes Whitefriars, the old Alsatia, the sanctuary of blackguard ruffianism in bygone times; then there is a smell of gas, and a vision of enormous gasometers; and then down goes the funnel again, and Blackfriars Bridge jumps over us. On we go, now at the top of our speed, past the dingy brick warehouses that lie under the shadow of St. Paul's, whose black dome looks down upon us as we scud along. Then Southwark Bridge, with its Cyclopean masses of gloomy metal, disdains to return the slightest response to the fussy splashing we make, as we shoot impudently through. Then come more wharfs and warehouses, as we glide past, while our pace slackens, and we stop gently within a stone's throw of London Bridge, at Dyers' Hall, where we are bundled out of the boat with as little ceremony as we were bundled in, and with as little, indeed, as it has ever been the custom to use since ceremony was invented — which, in matters of business, is a very useless thing.

And now, my friend, you have accomplished a half-penny voyage; and without being a conjuror, you can see how it is that this cheap navigation is so much encouraged. In the first place, it is cheaper than shoe-leather, leaving fatigue out of the question; it saves a good two miles of walking, and that is no trifle, especially under a heavy burden, or in slippery weather. In the second place, it may be said to be often cheaper than dirt, seeing that the soil and injury to clothing, which it saves by avoiding a two miles' scamper through the muddy ways, would damage the purse of a decent man more than would the cost of several journeys. These are considerations which the humbler classes appreciate, and therefore they flock to the cheap boats, and spend their half-pence to save their

pence and their time. This latter consideration of time-saving it is that brings another class of customers to the boats. In order that it may be remunerative to the projectors, every passage must be made with a regular and undeviating rapidity; and this very necessity becomes in its turn a source of profit, because it is a recommendation to a better class of business men and commercial agents, to whom a saving of time is daily a matter of the utmost importance. Hence the motley mixture of all ranks and orders that crowd the deck.

Besides these half-penny boats, there are others which run at double and quadruple fares; but they carry a different class of passengers, and run greater distances, stopping at intermediate stations. They are all remunerative speculations; and they may be said to have created the traffic by which they thrive. They have driven the watermen's wherries off the river almost as effectually as the railways have driven the stage-coaches from the road; but, like them, they have multiplied the passengers by the thousand, and have awakened the public to a new sense of the value of the river as a means of transit from place to place.

A PENNYWORTH OF LOCOMOTION.

If a history could be written of all the men who, by various means, have grown rich and retired upon a competence, we feel persuaded that by far the greater number of them would be found to be the men who have adopted the commendable maxim of giving "a good pennyworth for a penny." The bold adventurers, the successful speculators, the unscrupulous intriguers for sudden gain, constitute, even when taken all together, but a fraction of the immense section of society who, having the world under their feet, live in the enjoyment of respectability and ease. How numerous this class has grown of late years, the observant pedestrian who rambles occasionally through the suburbs and surroundings of the metropolis has a very sufficient idea. The thousands and tens of thousands of genteel residences which have risen and are daily rising in every direction, and which are fit for no other purpose than the occupancy of families well-to-do in the world, afford a sufficient attestation of the numbers of the class to which we allude: they have achieved independence by the industries of commerce; and they owe their success mainly, as their history would show, to the practical adoption of the maxim above quoted. The discovery has at length been made, though it dawned but slowly upon the commercial mind, that the surest, though it may not be the shortest, way to success is by responding to the demands of the million at

a rate of remuneration which shall ensure the growth and continuance of that demand. In consequence of the general reception of this discovery as a truth, and in consequence too of the competition which it has done not a little to increase, every necessary of life, and not a few of its luxuries, are now to be procured at a price which leaves the barest fractional margin of profit to the purveyor and the distributor, and which becomes remunerative only through the increased demand to which cheapness invariably supplies a stimulus.

But we are not going to write an essay on the peculiarities of present-day traffic, though something might be said on that subject worth the reading. We are going to take a ride in a penny omnibus. Here we are at Holborn-hill: the omnibus, a white one, has just turned round, and we are the first to jump in and ensconce ourselves in a further corner. Now we can ride to Tottenham Court-road for a penny, or to Edgware-road, if we choose, for two-pence. We are hardly seated, when an elderly dame literally *bundles* in, having a large brown-paper parcel, almost as big as a pannier, and a crushed and semi-collapsed bandbox, which she quietly arranges on the cushioned seat, as though she had engaged that whole side to herself. She is followed in an instant by an elderly and portly figure in patched boots, and well-worn dingy great coat, who takes the right-hand door corner, where he sits with clasped horny hands, nursing a corpulent umbrella, upon the handle of which he rests his unshaven chin, as with rueful face he peers over the low door. Bang! goes something on the roof; the explosion startles him from his contemplations, and causes him to poke out his head, which is instantly drawn in again, as the conductor opens the door, and keeps it open while a living tide rushes in—one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine! "No more room here, conductor: full here!" "Full inside!" roars the conductor, in reply. But we don't move on yet; there is a vision of muddy high-lows, corduroy garments, and coat-tails, clambering up consecutively

in the rear under the guidance of the conductor, and making a deafening uproar on the roof in the ceremony of arranging themselves upon what has been not inappropriately styled the "knife-board." "All right" bursts involuntarily from the lips of the conductor, as the last pair of bluchers disappears above our heads. Now the "'bus" gets under way, and we begin to look around us, and find that we form one of a very mixed company indeed. Opposite us sits the old lady with the bandbox and monster bundle. By her side is a very thin journeyman baker in his oven undress, and next to him a young man carrying a blue bag, and wearing a diamond ring on his little finger, a pair of false brilliants by way of shirt-studs, and a violet-coloured neck-tie. To his left is the wife of a mechanic, carrying a capless, bald-headed fat baby in her arms—baby sputtering, staring, and kicking in an ecstasy of delight, and stretching out its little puddings of fingers to reach the diamond-ringed hand that grasps the blue bag. Next to the mother of the baby is a blue-jacket, a regular tar, who, it would seem, has entered the omnibus for the sake of enjoying a "turn-in," and is endeavouring to compose himself to sleep. Next to him is our friend with his companion the stout umbrella, which he still hugs with undiminished affection. Of the party sitting on our side we cannot give so good an account, by reason of a very voluminous widow, weighing, at a rough guess, some twenty stone, who has almost eclipsed our view in that direction, and whose presence oppresses us with an idea of the cheapness of land-carriage in the present day —estimating it by weight. We stop for half a minute at the top of Chancery-lane, to put down the owner of the blue bag; somebody too drops from the roof, but another climbs up, and another rushes in as we are again getting under way, and, still full, we proceed onwards. We drop three more of our company at the corner of Red Lion-street, and among them, greatly to the relief of the horses and the writer, the ponderous widow. Now we find ourselves sitting next to a shoe-

maker, who is taking home a pair of new boots of his own manufacture; we can tell that much by the channels cut by countless wax-ends through the hardened skin of his little fingers. Next to him are a couple of boys, who, we suspect, have no other business to follow just now than to enjoy a penny ride for the pleasure of walking back again. We are soon in New Oxford-street, and now the elderly and portly man whom we first noticed lifts his corpulent umbrella carefully out of the omnibus, and disappears in the shop of an advertising tailor, probably in search of a new great-coat, which indeed it is high time that he had provided. Nobody gets up in place of the last few departures—for a good and sufficient reason, namely, that we are approaching the end of the pennyworth, and that all who go beyond Tottenham Court-road must pay a double fare. Now the conductor pops his head in at the window, and, to save time, collects the pence of all the penny passengers, so that there will be nothing to do beyond letting them out when we stop. At Tottenham Court-road all the passengers alight but ourselves, even the old lady emerging from behind her bandboxes, and walking off towards St. Giles's. But new customers are waiting, and in less than two minutes we are crammed again with a new cargo as various as the preceding one, and on we roll towards the Edgware-road. We set out with twelve insiders, and we stop at the end of our route with but four, and yet the conductor has taken twenty-two fares, by an accurate calculation, without actually pulling up to a stand-still once on the way. The necessity of despatch is recognised by both parties to the contract, and passengers, paying their money before they alight, are seen to step out while the vehicle goes on at an easy pace, and others clamber in or on to the roof in the same way.

We have got to the end of the journey, and nothing better offering on our return, we ascend to the roof, and ride back on the outside to our starting-point. There is a great deal of the

world to be seen in the inside of an omnibus, as those who are accustomed to ride in them very well know, but there is still more to be seen on the outside. The "knife-board," that is, the longitudinal seat which stretches from end to end of the roof, is a very favourite position with a numerous class of the metropolitan world. It is sufficiently far above the noise of the wheels to allow of undisturbed conversation, and is a point of eminence from which everything going forward below and around can be plainly seen. We have ourselves made from this point some curious surveys of men and things which we could not possibly have made in a less elevated position, or which did not, like that, afford us an ever-moving panorama of social life and action. We were indebted to it, not long ago, for a series of gastronomical observations of the mode in which London tradesmen live—a view, by the way, which might have satisfied the most sceptical of the material prosperity enjoyed by that class in spite of occasional cries of "bad times." Our omnibus slowly proceeded down a narrow and obstructed street. It was a warm summer's evening, between the hours of nine and ten, and the shopmen of the district, from want of back parlours, were taking their supper in the front floor, with the windows of their apartments open. We say nothing of the garnished sirloins, parsley-decked hams, pickled salmon and lobster salads, with cold gooseberry pies in profusion, of which we had a vision sufficiently distinct, as we were carried along—having no intention of carping at the dietary of John Bull. Our sole comment shall be the remark of a rather hungry-looking genius in fustian who shared the knife-board with us, whose eyes twinkled, and whose mouth visibly watered at the sight, as he exclaimed spontaneously, "Crikey! don't they do it up tidy up here—jest!"—wiping his mouth.

The boorish incivility and savage behaviour of omnibus drivers and conductors was, not many years ago, the theme of

universal irritation and complaint, and very justly so. At the present moment, the reverse is the case, a civil and obliging demeanour being the general characteristic of the profession. The key to the transformation is, doubtless, to be found in the fact, that civility pays better than its opposite. There is still, however, room for improvement in some particulars, as the following little incident will show. Entering the other day an omnibus which, by the inscription on its side, professed to carry passengers to —— church, we found ourselves, while yet a quarter of a mile from the church, the solitary occupants of it. The omnibus stopped, and the conductor called upon us to alight, saying that they did not go any further.

"Not go any further!" said we—"you don't pretend that I am to get out and walk a quarter of a mile in the rain?"

"Don't go any further, sir."

"Yes you do; you have the name of —— church painted on the side of your omnibus; you go there, certainly."

"Don't go any further, sir."

"Don't tell me that nonsense, you go where you profess to go, I suppose."

"Don't go any further, sir."

"But you must go further. I pay to be taken to —— church, and to the church I will be taken."

"Don't go any further, sir."

"Then I won't get out—you may drive me back to where you took me up, and I'll pay you nothing."

Conductor (slamming the door with a bang that shakes the whole fabric, and bawling to the driver), "Go-on-to-th-church-gen'lman-won't-git-out!" and away we drive, slashing through the mud and mire, and rolling, pitching, and labouring like a vessel in a storm, until we reach the church. At last we alight, and ask the conductor why he wished to set down his passengers a quarter of a mile from their destination.

"A quarter of mile! 'Tisn't six yards! *you* likes a good penn'orth, anyhow; *you* do."

If we confess to the soft impeachment, we shall add but one more to the numberless illustrations of the great leading principle which governs commercial transactions in the present day.

THE OBSTINATE SHOP.

WHILE occasionally threading our way through the great routes of traffic intersecting London in all directions, and contemplating the miles of shops which form the most attractive feature that commerce condescends to exhibit to the world, we have often compared them, in imagination, to the human face divine. Such a comparison may be a fanciful conceit on our part, which, it may be, will hardly hold good in all respects; yet are there some points of resemblance worthy, perhaps, of a passing notice, and suggestive too of reflections not absolutely devoid of a moral significance. Look, for instance, at yonder jeweller's shop, with its window of one clear and solid crystal, behind which, all arranged with exquisite taste, the gold, the silver, and the precious gems, of which a curious art has more than doubled the value, are glittering with a splendour that dazzles the eye, and accumulated with a profusion that defies calculation. What a favoured shop it is! how it might roll in riches, if it were given to rolling! what a smiling face it bares to the public view! and how it laughs at everything, and how it ignores *in toto* the rise and fall in the price of the four-pound loaf! Then, look again at that remarkable contrast over the way, which sells—no, which wants to sell—a few wretched daubs of worthless pictures that nobody is simple enough to buy; see what a dirty face it has, and how the grimy tears trickle down its

unwashed cheeks of bulging crown-glass; with what a moody, desperate, half-suicidal look it confronts the passers-by, who will not stop to make its acquaintance; and note how it despairs of ever making its way in the world, and is fast dying out drearily and dirtily, and vanishing into oblivion. Again, a little farther on—see what an impudent shop is here! Look at his brazen assumption; he actually walks out of his way, and pushes you out of yours; he has thrust himself out of doors, and lays half his length along upon the pavement. "Look at me," he says, "here I am; I'm somebody, let me tell you. What do I sell? what don't I sell? Tell me that. Whatever you want I've got, you may depend upon it; and if you pass on without buying, why it's so much the worse for you." This fellow deals in everything, because he wants to deal with everybody—and he does it too, and grows corpulent in quick time. Here again is another little shop, altogether as modest as his neighbour is impudent; he is too bashful to push himself forward, but retires a little back from the crush of thronging pedestrians; he is humble-minded, but yet bright and cheerful, with the consciousness of modest merit; he makes no great pretensions, but says to the discerning customer, "I have that within which passeth show;" and so he has—choice works of art, valuable old tomes, mediæval manuscripts, coins dug up from buried empires, and many other things rare and worth seeking after by those who want them and know their value. A few paces further on, and here is another specimen of shop nature, with a face like that of a gamester's bully, in which lying and robbery are to be read in every feature; he is all pretence and wire-blind, and has nothing to sell, except perhaps a few cabbage-leaf cigars, and a dozen or two of imitative meerschaums, which are nothing but mere shams of pipe-clay. He opens his mouth as wide as a barn-door, and talks of horses! horses! horses! he is up to all the mysteries of the turf, knows the real "tip," and invites you to come in and win; but don't go;

if you do, you will find him as dirty and empty within as he is pretentious without, and smelling of brandy and stale beer and tobacco. He is a betting-shop, thoroughly abandoned and unprincipled—the thief's lair, the robber's den, the bandit's cavern, of commercial London.

Are there not, further, shops of every variety of disposition and shade of character? Don't we see shops of good principle, trying to do what they can for the benefit of mankind? and don't we see too, sometimes, low and insolent ones, that ought to be ashamed to show their faces? Are there not shops so warm and snug and well-lined that they don't care a pin for appearances or the opinion of the world, but button up their pockets and snap their fingers at everybody? Then is there not the harum-scarum shop, dashing like mad, now at one thing and now at another, and doing a world of mischief to its neighbours, while it ruins itself in the process? Moreover, have we not seen the repentant shop, which, after a youth of insane vagaries, settles down at last to respectability and an honest trade? And, lastly, have we not all seen, and don't we see every day, the hypocritical shop, with its front of shining brass and plate glass, and its counterfeit goods and fraudulent announcements? and doesn't it smash, and go to ruin before our eyes, every day, only to begin again to-morrow? There is no denying all this, and no escaping, either, the conviction that shops have a way of their own, and that it is sometimes very difficult to break them in, and make them take to the right way—the way to competence through the route of honesty. And this brings us to the subject of the present paper—the Obstinate Shop, whose history we shall very summarily record.

We may almost be said to have known the Obstinate Shop before it was born, seeing that some eleven years ago it was a small patch of ground about twelve feet square, backed by a dead wall, and inhabited by a very quarrelsome cock, generally in a state of mud and excitement, and three or four roopy

hens, fenced in by a dilapidated railing. One day this happy family were suddenly summoned to the silent land, and before their bones were picked bare, a gathering of bricks and mortar and deal boards assembled on the spot, and in a few weeks the Obstinate Shop rose into being. Like the "fine little boy" of the nursery myth,

> "It came into the world with two eyes in its head,
> The one was green and the other was red;"

in other words, it was born "a doctor's shop," as the neighbours called it, with two monstrous carboys of crimson and emerald hues, which had a prodigious effect at night time, as they glared across the road and routed the horses from the cabstand, which heretofore had held undisputed possession of the ground. It began its career as "MEDICAL HALL," which words in golden letters were blazoned upon its forehead, and its first attempts at speech were such unintelligible jargon as defied comprehension. "Ext. sen. pulv. jal. tinct. rhub.," it said; and then, "tart. em. pulv. ipecac.," and more of the sort; and then it would ring the changes with "glaub. sal. g. ammon. sapon. cast.," etc. etc. Whether it was that this kind of rhetoric was lost upon the neighbourhood, or whether they were well enough supplied with that sort of goods already, we cannot undertake to say; but after staring for three whole months through his green and red orbs, the shop was tired out, dismounted the Medical Hall, sent off its goggle eyes to a less benighted neighbourhood, and shut himself up in dudgeon for a whole month.

It recovered its temper at the end of that time, and showed quite a joyful face when a young new-married couple came and crammed it full of gay prints and silks, and shawls and dresses, and laces and gloves, and everything that ladies love so dearly to wear, and to tumble about on the counter. The new mistress was industrious enough, and might be seen, "a portrait of a lady at full length," any morning at seven

o'clock, as she stood in the empty window, dressing it for the day, while her husband polished the glass, swept the floor, and arranged the goods inside. Too soon, however, the cheerful face became overshadowed with a cloud, and then it grew sallow and careful, and then it disappeared for some months, while the husband had all the work to do alone: his face, too, grew longer and longer, and from a hopeful man he grew a sorrowful one; and when the young wife appeared again, with an infant at her bosom, she was no longer a cheerful, but a worn and withered woman, and hopeless, but for the child which clung round her heart, and was never out of her arms. The poor man, it was plain, did not know how to act; his goods spoiled, or went behind the fashion for want of a sale; but still he held on—for two years he did so, and then came debt and difficulty, in the midst of which he disappeared. It seemed all the fault of the Obstinate Shop; it would not do business, in spite of all their hard work and harder thrift.

"A cobbler he was, and he sat in a stall,"

who had the shop next; it had been let to him at a low rent, in consequence of the failure of the former tenants, and he sat there hammering away upon his lapstone gaily enough; and he might have sat there to this day, had he been content to let it remain a cobbler's stall. But he must needs take it into his head to make it a dashing cheap shoe shop, with borrowed capital; and in less than twelve months he went the way of his predecessors. The shop was as obstinate with the cobbler as it was with the draper, and he was obliged to retire with his lapstone and last to his original cellar, where—for cobblers have a philosophy as tough as sole-leather, and proof against adversity—we are happy to state he still plies his useful calling.

A tailor tried it next; but, as he rarely tried on a suit upon a customer's back, or succeeded in taking the measure of the

neighbourhood, the good man, in the course of a very few months, justified the oracular decree of the united company of cabmen who watched his operations, and was, to use the precise terms of their prophecy, himself "sewed up," and compelled to depart.

By this time the shop had got a bad character, which there is no doubt that it richly deserved; the bill-stickers began to cast a longing eye upon its shutters, now grown dingy and blistered, as they went their rounds; one adventurous knight of the brush, unable to resist the opportunity, clapped a broad-side in the centre; this served as a signal to the whole tribe, and in a few days the Obstinate Shop was swaddled in the large-type literature of trade. How long it remained thus papered up, while the idle vagabonds of the district played pitch-halfpenny beneath its shadow, we cannot exactly say; but we distinctly recollect the astonishing efforts of the water-man of the cab-stand, who for two whole days was digging, scraping, rubbing, and swilling his way through the solid hide of placards, to get at the shutters beneath. These were at length exhumed, taken down, and refreshed with a coat of paint; the dust, dirt, and old shreds of broadcloth, scraps of list, and other *disjecta* of the vanished tailor, were swept forth, and the place cleaned and put in trim. Then a broad-shouldered man, with clean white apron and sleeves to match, was seen going in and out in company with a number of barrels, boxes, and baskets, and canvass-covered packages of various sizes; up went a projecting sign-board, visible half a mile off, and inscribed on both sides with the words, "Dodds, Butterman;" and next morning the shop opened once more, with the lower half of the window cut away, and exhibiting an interior crammed with pork, bacon, butter, cheese, hams, French eggs, etc. etc., all, as the modest Dodds declared, of very first-rate quality. In spite of a marked want of encouragement from the very first, Dodds waited for trade, with a conviction that it must come at last, when the merit of his

articles had had time to make its way. Finding customers would not come to him, he went in search of them; hawked his country pork around among the neighbours, and when he could not get it off fresh, pickled it, to save its life, and got in more. He left no stone unturned to raise a connection; he canvassed personally, billed, puffed, and circularized the whole parish, but all to no purpose; the Obstinate Shop would not give in; so Dodds gave out, and moved half a mile lower down the road, where he has thriven well since.

"Buy a pair of fine soles this morning, sir—beautiful cod's head and shoulders—any fine salmon to-day, sir?" such were the accents which suddenly assailed our ears as we were strolling past the Obstinate Shop, a few weeks only after the departure of Dodds. Finn the fishmonger had taken his place and succeeded to the butterman's board, merely depressing it to an inclined plane. It was evident very soon that Finn was a man either of extraordinary penetration or of very limited capital, for he had decamped within a fortnight, and abandoned the experiment, and we lost sight of him till about a twelvemonth ago, when we stumbled upon him at Billingsgate, with far more fish around him and flesh about him than formed either his personal or proprietary stock at the Obstinate Shop.

After suffering once more a month's eclipse, down came the shutters again, under the auspices of an anonymous tradesman, who does not choose to parade his patronymic before the world. Now it is literature that makes an assault upon the neighbourhood. The windows are again restored and cleaned, and each pane serves for the frame of one or more pictures of events extraordinary or supernatural. Here Napoleon Bonaparte, on a white horse, is surmounting the Alps, which he cannot fail to clear in three paces; and a score of blue Frenchmen are lugging along a cannon, whose length is about the diameter of the base of Mont St. Gothard. Here a dreadful gunpowdery explosion has blown twenty valiant fellows into

the air, and out of a windmill which is not big enough to contain the hats of half of them. Here is a whole gallery of works of art of the same kind, all illustrative of bloody deeds, ghastly narratives, and goblin fictions. Here the *Times* is lent to read, and may be had for half-price to-morrow; and infidel publications, and blasphemy and sedition, under a thin disguise, or in no disguise at all, are dispensed at the smallest possible charge. But the Obstinate Shop won't stand even this; the man without a name gets a pressing invitation from a worthy magistrate, and does not come back to take down the shutters; and again the shop has its own way.

"Sweets to the sweet" lollypops! A young widow, with a fat, kicking baby, and a shop-full of black jack, hard-bake, Bonaparte's ribs, stick-jaw, candied cobbler, and a whole catalogue of nice and delectable things, which are so excellent for children to let alone—such is the next exhibition displayed in the Oostinate Shop. How the widow could never make it answer—how the little dirty, filthy, ragged, and never-sufficiently-to-be-despised young heathens that had *no* money glued their grimy faces to the glass, and flattened their noses against the window all day long; and how the charming, lovely, respectable and amiable little Christian dears who *had* plenty of money to spare never came near it—how unprincipled young thieves crawled into her shop and helped themselves while her back was turned, and how Smashing Moll made a dead set at her, and, by purchasing pennyworths and getting good change for base coin, half ruined her—and how the poor widow was obliged to give it up for want of custom, and go out to service, putting her child to nurse—all these things the reader must imagine, as we have not time to dwell upon them.

After the widow came a baker, who dug the ground in front, and built an oven—and went away. After the baker came a beer-seller, who filled the oven with barrels, and wasted fifty pounds of hard cash in trying to persuade the people that

"this is the *noted* house for XXX"—and went away. After the beer-seller came an oyster-man, who stuck to his damp trade all day and half the night, and added ginger-beer to oysters, and pork-pies to ginger-beer, and speculated in periwinkles—and went away. After the oyster-man came a potato-dealer, who cried with a loud voice ever and anon, "Three poun' tuppens! three poun' tuppens!"—and went away. The Obstinate Shop would stand none of them; it had made up its mind to do no business, and no business has it ever done worth the mentioning. When we last saw it, it was shut up, and again a prey to the bill-stickers, stuck about with a hundred labels telling of its disgrace, and serving for no other purpose than as a warning to traders to beware of Obstinate Shops.

THE COMPLAINT OF A STRANGE CHARACTER.

I SUPPOSE I was born to set the world an example—at any rate, I have figured in every capacity that the most ingenious imagination can conceive, and have filled well-nigh every situation which mortal man, whether living or dead, can be made to occupy. I have led a long life, in the course of which I have been everything, and I can say with almost equal truth I have done nothing. Every feature of my face is familiar to at least fifty thousand of her Majesty's subjects; and yet I have but few acquaintances, and still fewer friends. I, of all men, am to be designated as the man who has "played many parts." I have gone through every possible calamity incidental to the human lot, besides a great many that are impossible even to the most unfortunate; and I have been blessed a thousand times in the course of my life beyond the sum of human felicity—and, what may appear strange, I have never grieved at the one lot, nor rejoiced at the other. I have fought desperately, with but a rag of drapery round my loins, against savage lions and tigers, wrestled with monsters of the forest and the flood, slept tranquilly in the embrace of the boa-constrictor—been pierced through and through with every description of deadly weapon, ancient and modern—and been hurled headlong from horrible precipices into horrible gulfs—and here I am, and none the worse for it all. And I have sat at a magnificent feast arrayed in gorgeous robes in

"my ancestral halls"—I have led my valiant hosts to victory in embattled fields, and have swayed my sceptre on a golden throne—and here I am, scribbling in a two-pair back, and none the better for it all. How all this came about, the reader will soon know. The key to my "strange, eventful history" lies in one word—Ladies and gentlemen, I am a Model.

I was born in London, not far from where the Pantheon now stands, in Oxford-street. My father was an ambitious artist, who wasted the best part of his life in the pursuit of what is called high art, and passed the days of his manhood's years seated from morning to night in front of a canvas as big as he could afford to buy. My first sensation of existence was one of cold; I suspect I woke into consciousness for the first time one October morning, through lying bottom upwards on the table, in the character of a murdered innocent in my father's great picture of the "Massacre of the Judean Children under Herod." I squalled and kicked, on awaking with the cold; and if I know anything of my father's temper and usages on such occasions, these signs of life irritated him, and I was packed off out of the room as good for nothing, at least until I could be coaxed again to sleep. During infancy, I can recollect, I prattled a good deal on my mother's knee in the capacity of the child of the Madonna, as well as doing Cupid in every variety of attitude. When I grew old enough, my mother taught me to read, which was all the instruction I ever got. I taught myself to write, with a crayon on blank canvases, in after years. I should in all probability have been sent to school, had my mother lived. But I had the unhappiness to lose her in my seventh year, and was turned over to the care of a housekeeper, who was a crabbed, cindery kind of vixen, and but too glad to get rid of me under any pretext. I passed my time chiefly in my father's studio, where I would sit for hours on the floor, with the handle of a little cabinet drawer in my mouth, in the cha-

racter of Romulus sucking the wolf, or lie sprawling under a few vine-leaves gathered from the garden, as one or both of the babes in the wood—or sat demurely, or stood with a fool's cap on my head, or gesticulated in every variety of attitude for the pupils of a village school—my father poking me into any shape he wanted with the knobby end of his mahl-stick, without rising from his seat. He grew a sort of mysterious terror to me, and under his cold and petrifying glance I was afraid to move, and thus early acquired the habit of remaining in one position, however disagreeable it might be, without flinching, for the hour together. This, however, was the only discipline which I underwent; and having plenty of time for exercise with the neighbours' children, I grew up tolerably healthy, but with a mortal hatred to the arts and everything connected with them. Thus by degrees I advanced into boyhood, and became big enough to serve for a shepherd-boy or a young cattle-driver—a young angler or a shrimper with fluttering rags and bare feet—or the young princes in the tower in a close-fitting suit of silk and velvet. As young Arthur on the point of having his eyes put out, I was shown off at one of the exhibitions to such advantage that I became quite famous among the artists as a model stripling, and was bandied about from one to the other among the professionals, figuring one day as an angel on Jacob's ladder, starving the next as Ishmael under a rock, and rioting on the third as the boy Bacchus crowned with a wreath of vine-leaves. My poor father found this much more profitable than putting me to school—and to school I never went.

I might have learned something at least of the practice of the art, but my father never offered to teach me or encouraged me to learn. He said I had no genius. I imagine he was right; certain it is I had no inclination, and never desired to make the experiment. The older I grew the more my figure came into request—my faultless shape, my well-modelled features, and, above all, the statue-like tranquillity

of position which I maintained when once "set," brought me a connection, and for many years I was scarcely a day unengaged! My father was seized with paralysis just as I became of age, and, dying shortly after, bequeathed me his debts to pay, a few unfinished pictures, and the old furniture of the house. It took everything there was to square accounts with the creditors, who considerately gave me a receipt in full when they found there was nothing more to be got. Thus was I driven, at my entrance into manhood, to abandon the paternal home and retire to a private lodging—to begin the world for myself, with nothing but myself—my five feet ten and a half inches, for my capital.

I was now a man, and a model, but I was nothing else, and had no prospect of becoming anything else, though I ransacked my brains day and night in the hope of finding some other opening for my no-talents. I thought of the stage, but I had no memory, or if I had such a faculty it had never been called into exercise. I tried for a clerkship, but they would not have my writing, which I laboured in vain a long time to improve—and I had but indefinite notions of arithmetic. There was no other road open to me—I was good for nothing but to be looked at and painted, and to that I must submit. I must play the part of an animated image, a sort of breathing brother to a marble block, a lay-figure, or a plaster-cast. There was one consolation attending my lot. It never debased me to the level of the low and vulgar; if I was condemned by circumstances to be a model, I determined to be a model, ostensibly at least, of a gentleman—and outwardly to assume that rank in the world, cost what privations it might. So I have lived a gentleman upon town, my hands unsoiled by labour, my linen white as a lord',s my costume and whole outward man undeniably genteel. For now nearly forty years have I been known among the profession as Gentleman G——; and if I have achieved no triumphs in my own person, my *vera effigies*, in a thousand characters, has

won the applause and admiration of mankind. I have been hung — ahem — in five hundred galleries, as an impersonation of the warrior, the senator, and the hero; and in as many more perhaps as brigand, bandit, or bold outlaw. I have lent my head to Achilles, Paris, and Hector — to Eneas, Turnus, and Euryalus. My lower limbs have been substituted for those of half the great men of the present and past centuries. On feet of mine King Charles the First walks to the block, Napoleon forces the bridge of Arcola, and Nelson boards the ships of the enemy. I have languished in the dungeons of the Inquisition because Galileo could not be had to do it, and been bandaged for execution instead of the unfortunate D'Enghien for the same reason; and I can say that I have borne either fate with an equal mind. Habit, which creates our world for us, has long reconciled me to the position which untoward circumstances thrust me into. As age has crept upon me, I am able to say that neither my usefulness nor popularity has declined. I am as good now (or at least I was till lately) for a sage or a senator as I was in infancy for a Cupid, or a babe massacred or at the breast;—I am considered capital as a cardinal, as I was twenty years ago for a bravo. I have had, too, all along, a pleasing satisfaction in knowing that in the little circle in which I domestically revolve, I have been regarded with a kind of mystery, and have been looked upon for years as some decayed personage of eminence, living *incog.* the life of a recluse after the setting of former greatness. I may say without vanity that my appearance hitherto more than justifies this flattering supposition, which I have cautiously refrained from dissipating. Reports have sometimes been whispered about that I was the Dauphin of France, the son of the unfortunate Louis the Sixteenth, and that my pensive cast of countenance was the index of ineradicable grief for my murdered parents and lost throne. At other times I have been set down as a Polish prince, calmly waiting an opportunity to vindicate the independence of my native country. Then I have been thought a Russian noble-

man, escaped miraculously from the massacre of the conspirators at the accession of Nicholas to the throne of the Czars. None of these guesses at my supposed royal or noble origin have, however, retained a definite shape for any length of time, but have varied with the demands of the hour. If I have never denied the truth of any of them, neither have I countenanced a single conjecture of the kind; and when each in its turn has vanished away, the conviction has remained in the minds of the observant public, that though they may be mistaken in discovering my real rank, yet there could not be a doubt that I had been somebody—which is true enough.

But woe is me! While others are endeavouring in vain to discover the source of my former imagined greatness, I have myself recently made the discovery of a fact which will be the ruin of me. Now that my head is bald, and my whiskers nearly white, and other signs of years come stealing on, the source of my income threatens to fail me—to fail at the time when it will be most wanted, at the approach of the infirmities of age. It was the other day, as I lay stretched upon a bed of death, upon which I had personated Cardinal Wolsey, with chalked cheek and half-averted face, for four hours a day for the last week, that the horrible fact dawned, or rather darted with fierce and prophetic force upon my mind. I have striven in vain to shake off the conviction that then forced itself upon my distracted conscience; but it will not be got rid of—on the contrary, it grows daily stronger, and will not be beckoned away. Have compassion upon me, O my friends, I AM GROWING FAT—I feel it daily and hourly in every inch of my flesh—and I am a ruined man. At the rate I have been going on for the last month, I shall be twenty stone weight in another year—and then "Othello's occupation's gone," and I must take up with Boniface or Falstaff without stuffing. "Oh that this too, too solid flesh would melt, thaw, and resolve itself into" anything, so that I got rid of it, and retained my gentlemanly proportions and necessary competence. In vain have I

resorted to every device of diet, and regimen, and exercise; I have tried semi-starvation and total abstinence, and walked myself in the early morning hours till weary and footsore. All is of no avail; I am doomed to perpetual expansion. My close-fitting suit has been already twice let out, in order to take me in. My patrons already begin to murmur the fatal words, "Too stout," which are more than I can bear. Ah, those fatal monosyllables!—they are the terms of my death-warrant. I am a gone model. What will become of me? There is but one hope left, and of that I hasten to avail myself. I throw my case upon the consideration of a generous public. Society certainly owes me something. The age which worships heroes so devoutly and enthusiastically, will not altogether despise the representative of a hundred heroes. A race which subscribes its thousands to erect a monument to one great man, will not refuse the necessaries of life to one who has in his time performed the part of almost every man of note in the biography. My monuments exist already in a thousand shapes, and are enshrined in costly cabinets and lordly galleries, while my rebellious unfilial flesh yet walks the earth, and, unless a grateful public soon comes to the rescue, will be condemned to wander in forlorn and friendless obesity, a prey to the cold alms of alien charity. I appeal, therefore, to the philanthropy of my fellow-men, and to their love for heroism and the arts. My publisher has kindly consented to receive and forward to me the contributions of a benevolent and discriminating public, who in preventing the poverty which threatens my future lot, will know that they are supplying comfort in his old age to the luckless representative of most of the master-spirits of the past—and to one who, lacking it is true many desirable accomplishments, has been always, when off duty, in appearance at least, the model of a gentleman.

LONDON SUNDAY TRADING.

One of the most startling spectacles to be met with in the great wilderness of London—because it is the one which comes upon the stranger most unexpectedly—is that of the Sunday Market. To the staid and sober inhabitant of a quiet country town, who has been accustomed from his youth upwards to see the Sabbath at least outwardly reverenced, the sight of one of these crowded places, the theatre of a vociferous and furious traffic on the morning of the day of rest, is generally revolting in the extreme. We had lately the curiosity to visit such a scene, with a view to forming some judgment as to what might be urged in its defence, and we shall now proceed to describe our impressions.

It is about eight o'clock in the morning of the second Sunday in April, 1850, and we are standing at the junction of the Barbican with Chiswell-street, at the point where this line of thoroughfare is intersected by Whitecross-street, up which we have to proceed as far as Old Street-road, about a quarter of a mile, the whole extent of which is the arena of one of the most extensive markets in the metropolis.

Although the shutters of most of the shops, nearly five-sixths of which are devoted to Sunday-trading, have been down for nearly an hour, but little business has been done or is yet doing. The few customers who have already completed their purchases, and are hastening homewards, have an

aspect of decency, almost of respectability; others of similar appearance are gliding about here and there, and transacting their business with all possible celerity; and it is tolerably plain to the observer that the use of the Sunday Market is not to them a matter of choice. These are probably persons who, not having received their weekly wages until a late hour, and being compelled by poverty to live from hand to mouth, have no other means of procuring their Sunday dinner than that which this market presents. It is obvious from the expression of some countenances, that they feel the tyranny of circumstances which compels them to break in upon the time of rest. Let us at least give them due praise for the decent feeling which induces them to come at the earliest possible hour.

As we advance up the street, we see the shopkeepers busily engaged in displaying their goods to the best advantage for sale. Purchasers being as yet but few, opportunity is taken to make as good a show as possible against their arrival. We are astonished to find that the market is not confined to what might be considered by some a fair apology for it—the sale of necessary food. In addition to the shops of butchers, bakers, grocers, and provision dealers, not only are those of the slop and ready-made clothes' sellers wide open, but the linendrapers, hosiers, milliners, furniture-brokers, ironmongers, and dealers in hardware and trinkets, are carefully setting out their windows and show boards. Curriers and leather-sellers, moreover, have opened their doors, and are already doing a brisk trade, their shops being crowded with working shoemakers, selecting the materials of their craft. Unless these poor fellows are actually at the present time working seven days in the week, it is difficult to conceive what should bring them in such multitudes to purchase their materials on the Sunday morning.

But an hour has passed away, and the street, now rapidly filling, presents a very different aspect from that which first

struck our view. The shopkeepers have at length completed their arrangements, and now, standing at their open doors, and arrayed in aprons and shirt-sleeves, they begin with pretty general accord to bellow for custom. "Buy, buy, buy!" explodes a brawny butcher; and the note is taken up by his neighbour, and repeated by others in every direction a hundred times a minute, rapid and deafening as a running fire of musketry. It would appear as though this simultaneous appeal to the pockets of the public were a signal well known to the neighbourhood, for all the tributaries of Whitecross-street now pour forth their streams of hungry, meagre, and unwashed denizens, to swell the inharmonious concert. The shrill shriek of infant hawkers pierces through the roaring din, and the diminutive grimy urchins are discerned manfully pushing their difficult way among the throng, bent upon the sale of certain trifling articles, upon the produce of which, in all probability, their chance of a supply of food for the day is dependent. "Who'll buy my Congreves, three boxes a penny?" "Blacking here! Here's your real Day and Martin; a ha'penny a skin!" "Grid—grid—gridirons! Who wants a gridiron for three-halfpence?" "Hingans—hingans here! Here's your hingans, a ha'penny the lot!" These cries, and a dozen others, from a band of young urchins scattered among the multitude, form the squeaking treble of the discordant chorus that is raging on all sides. We discover as we pass slowly along that a pretty strong staff of policemen is present, perambulating continually among the mass of people, ready to disperse the first nucleus of a mob, or to quell by prompt interference the least appearance of a quarrel. It is plainly owing to their presence that the highway is passable at all, and that some degree of order is maintained amid the furious traffic that now goes on.

It is now drawing near to ten o'clock, and we are struck by the appearance and character of the present attendants upon the market as compared with those of an earlier hour. The

males are for the most part the very lowest class of operatives, mingled with a still lower order of people, of whose probable occupation we would rather not hazard a surmise. We look in vain for a single one among them who has changed his working-day attire for a better suit; and the suspicion rises in the mind that nine-tenths of the whole tribe bear their entire wardrobe upon their backs. It is pretty plain that a good proportion of them have but recently been roused up from the heavy sleep of intoxication: half awake, and less than half sober, some crawl doggedly at the heels of their hapless wives in sullen silence, only broken at intervals by the involuntary ejaculation of an oath or a curse. Others, again, are altogether as noisy, and vie with the traders themselves in the loudness of their vociferations. Here one is chaffering for a pair of high-lows, and jokingly threatening to brain the shopkeeper with the heavy-armed heels, unless he abate his price. There another plants heavy blows with his fist in the sides of an earthenware pan, by way of trying its metal, and, paying for it the price of a few halfpence, confides it to the charge of his ragged child, with a caution that he had better break his neck than let it fall. Here comes a couple who have completed their purchases for the day: the whole toilet of the man would not fetch sixpence at Rag-fair. Beneath a hat that should have scared the crows of a vanished generation, a shock of sandy unkempt locks shades a visage dark with dirt, darker still with the unmistakeable traits of brutality; a huge brown overcoat, patched and stained in every part, endues his whole frame; his toes peep muddily forth from the fragments of what was once a pair of boots. In his bristly mouth is stuck a short and blackened pipe; both hands are firmly thrust into the side pockets of his coat; under his right arm is a loaf of bread, and under his left the half of a huge boar's head. Close behind him follows his wife, laden with a dilapidated basket, crammed with potatoes and withered turnip-tops yellow with age. Her figure is one shapeless

bundle of worthless rags, stiff and nauseous with grease and defilement: bonnet she has none, but a piece of tattered muslin does duty as a cap, from beneath which her jet black hair streams in disorder. Her pale and bloated cheeks show in fearful contrast with a horribly-contused and livid black eye — the palpable handwriting of her loving lord. Her upper lip too has been recently gashed with a heavy blow. Panting with her burthen, and evidently displeased at some recent real or imaginary grievance, she is venting her wrath upon a miserable child, whom she drags by her side, and whose hand she occasionally relinquishes for the purpose of making a sudden aim at his bare head with the street-door key, which hangs upon her fore-finger; but the hapless little wretch is too well used to such endearments to be easily caught, and generally manages to parry the blow with his hands, or to elude it altogether.

We observe as we pass on that the gin-shops are now almost the only ones which are closed, and that the portion of the causeway upon which they abut, being free from the distractions of business, affords a space for loungers and gossips, who, having accomplished their purchases, love to while away an hour or two in conversation. Time goes on — and the bell of St. Luke's church, whose tall, ugly steeple, fashioned after the model of a factory chimney, looms dimly in the hazy atmosphere, tolls out to summon the worshippers to morning service. At the sound of the bell the shopkeepers step out and put up a shutter or two, leaving, however, light enough to carry on the traffic within. The trade in butchers' meat, vegetables, and other edibles, now sensibly decreases in amount, while at the same time it is despatched with greater rapidity. Parties late in the market are compelled to take what is to be had without the leisure or opportunity to exercise a choice. This is the very nick of time which the provident trader adopts to get rid of his old and worthless stock: it is said that many a tainted joint finds its way to the bake-

house, which, but for the tardiness of these lagging customers, had been made over to the dogs, or thrown away as useless; and full prices are obtained at the spur of the moment for viands that might have been purchased the night before at three-fourths of that amount.

Before the bells have ceased tolling, the thoroughfare has become tolerably passable for those who have no objection to rub shoulders occasionally with a perambulating joint of meat or basket of vegetables; but we remark that the very few persons who, living in this district, emerge from their dwellings, prayer-book in hand, bound for church, choose rather to escape from the main thoroughfare as soon as possible, and pick their devious way through by-lanes and back streets to the sacred edifice.

Now sets in the hebdomadal current of dish-laden individuals bound to the different bakers' shops, and carrying their Sunday's dinner with careful haste. It is amazing to note the number and variety of viands that dive consecutively into the darkened entrances; and one wonders how it comes to pass that each of the bearers manages to recover his own proper portion when the business of the oven is over. There are a prodigious number of them that appear, to an unpractised eye, so exactly alike, that the task of distinguishing them apart would seem hopeless to one unacquainted with the management of the mystery. A very favourite mode of insuring the variety of two courses at the expense of one baking prevails very extensively: it is managed in this way: the housewife provides a large earthenware dish, about twenty inches by fourteen, and three or four deep, having a division near the centre; the potatoes are crammed plentifully in the bottom of the larger compartment, and the modest joint rests upon them; the other division is appropriated to the pudding, in the manufacture of which we could perceive that a very considerable variety of talent had been displayed.

The bell has now ceased tolling, and the tumultuous uproar

of the market subsides to a moderate murmur. Still the traffic is brisk and abundant in the interior of the shops. We remark those of the grocers and tea-dealers crammed to overflowing, and all the assistants behind the counter divested of their outer garments, and reeking with heat and hurry, weighing, measuring, and packing with consummate despatch. The curriers, too, are dealing out soles and upper leathers, welts, wax, and paste, with a rapidity rarely equalled on a week-day, among the meagre and pallid crowd, who can scarcely find standing-room in front of the counter. The drapers' shops are swarming with customers of both sexes: caps, bonnets, shawls, handkerchiefs, and ribbons, change owners in a twinkling. Lads in fustian jackets are pulling about the many-coloured wares, resolved on treating their sweethearts with a morsel of finery; and smartly-dressed lasses are matching their pale faces with a strip of paler ribbon, or selecting a gaudy neck-tie for some favoured swain. The shoemakers and the marts for ready-made clothes have all a good share of encouragement, and do an amount of business in the Sunday forenoon, according to the candid confession of some of their proprietors, exceeding that of any two days in the week, Saturday excluded. This in-door traffic continues till past noonday; and the shops are seldom finally closed before one o'clock, when the religious part of the community are returning from church. The appearance of the whole street, when the market is over, resembles very closely the deserted arena of a country fair, or Covent-garden-market after business-hours — the ground being one mash of mud and decaying vegetable matter.

We must not omit all mention of the species of literature which finds encouragement among the frequenters of the Sunday Market. Books we saw none, but good store of single sheets of all sizes, and varying in price from one halfpenny up to sixpence. All the Sunday newspapers are regularly placarded and sold; and in addition to them, there was an

abundance of the blood-and-murder, ghost-and-goblin journals, embellished for the most part with melodramatic cuts, where what was wanting in truth of artistic delineation was plentifully made up in energy of action. It would seem that there is a charm in pistols, daggers, bludgeons, and deadly weapons of all sorts, with the assaults and assassinations they suggest, that is irresistible to the population of London. No matter how gross the ignorance or stupidity of a writer, so that he have but a deed of blood or violence to unfold: a murder is so delicious a morsel to the palates of a debased multitude, that it imparts a relish to the most intolerable dulness, and invests imbecility itself with the attributes of genius and talent.

The above, though necessarily brief, is, as far as we are aware, a truthful delineation of the Sunday Market. Of such localities, differing more or less in their primary features, there are five or six in the metropolis. When we take into account the demoralisation that must unavoidably accrue from the total neglect of religious duties which the continuance of this practice necessarily entails, we cannot but concur in the sentiments of those who are striving at the present moment to obtain by legal means the power of suppressing it. It is sad to learn, that though the great majority of the parties who gain most by this ill-favoured traffic are willing, nay, desirous, that it should be put an end to at once and for ever, it is yet, through the resistance of a petty minority, continued in their despite. Four-fifths of the Sunday-traders, we know from indisputable authority, would be willing to close their shops from Saturday night to Monday morning; but they are compelled in self-defence, in order to preserve their average custom, to open on the Sunday, because a few stubborn opponents persist in so doing. The evil is great in a physical as well as a moral point of view. Many of the shopmen in the district above-described, and in other places, as we are credibly informed, are confined behind the counter from seven or eight in the morning to ten at night the whole week through: to men so situated the

relaxation of the Sunday is not merely a luxury, but a necessity, but from its enjoyment they are debarred by the continuance of a practice which cannot be spoken of without regret—and loss of health is the general consequence.

There has been no lack of legislation upon this subject; but it is a question whether legislative interference will effect much good. The law of Charles II., which would appear upon the face of it to be a good and efficient law for the purpose, has been found, in working, the next thing to a nullity. It levies a fine of five shillings upon the offender; but as the magistrates will not convict for more than one offence in one day, it is practically of no avail, as the profits upon one morning's business in some of the largest shops is from fifty to a hundred times that amount. Moreover, the trader can, and does, when he knows that informations are a-foot, reduce the five shillings to one shilling by taking out a summons against himself, which bars the issue of a second summons, and prevents the disgrace, as well as the expense of a hearing, as of course he does not appear to criminate himself.

We would not rashly impute the whole cause of Sunday trading to shopkeepers and hucksters. Not a little of the evil arises from a practice of paying weekly wages late on Saturday night; and to remedy this every proper effort should be directed. Indeed, while such a practice prevails, all legislative interference on the subject would be worse than useless.

THE GRAND ARMY.

I WONDER whether the world needs to be told that there is a great battle fought in London every day. Such is the case, whether they know it or not—a real battle, and no paltry raid or affair of outposts, but a contest big with great results, greater than most men have the wit to calculate. It is fought at considerable cost, too, and remorseless shedding of—ink, not blood. The forces engaged are tried and trusty men, and nearly one and all may be reckoned as troops of the line (and ruler). They are under marching order every day of their lives, and have to break up their bivouacs at an early hour in the morning, some almost as early as the dawn; these are the light infantry, and they march for the most part in Indian file to their several positions on the field of strife; they may be considered generally as occupying the outposts, and not a few of them commence skirmishing as early as seven or eight o'clock in the day. The grand attack of the combined forces does not, however, take place till ten—and up to that hour, and perhaps for a few minutes later, (for the best soldiers miscalculate their distance sometimes,) the troops are mustering in thousands and tens of thousands from all points of the compass. From the north and the south, from the east and the west, up to the time that Bow Bells ring out TEN, "the cry is still, they come!" They come rushing on the iron-road at the heels of the fire-steed from quarters, half a dozen

or a dozen, or a score of miles away; and they come in crowded chariots crammed within and crowded without, with their militant forces; and they come in myriads of marching foot, through high-ways and by-ways, through straight ways and crooked ways, through wet ways and dry ways, and through long ways and short ways—all flocking to take their stand around the Hougomont of commerce, the centre of which may be supposed to be the Bank of England.

It may be remarked, that among this order of fighting men there are no cavalry; they mount no horses; their chargers (and they are famous to a man for charging) are chiefly high stools of black leather stuffed with horse-hair. They wield weapons proverbially thirsty, and dripping all day long with gore, both black and red; yet they never go to loggerheads, though not unfrequently, when the battle goes hard with them, they are forced to go to logarithms, and then they are cheered on by Napier, not him of the peninsula, but him of the pen and the rods and the bones. They sometimes do fearful deeds in self-defence with a dash of their weapon; with one scratch of its sharp point a single trooper shall shake down a proud house which has stood haughtily for generations, and crumble it to ruin more hopeless by far than though it had been a target for all Napoleon's cannon. Another has but to point his weapon to the east or the west, and off at the signal go a hundred men and a thousand tons of goods under a cloud of swelling canvas, on a twelve months' voyage to circumnavigate the globe. A third wags for a moment his goose-quill spear, and incontinently a thousand iron machines, which had stood idle for months, start into activity with a roar and a clatter that never pause or relax for, it may be, half a year together. A fourth, with point of polished steel, makes a few cabalistic signs, and, lo and behold! no sooner does Foh Chin Long, the *millionaire* of the celestial empire, get an inkling of it, which he does very soon, than he and his are in such a state of excitement and bustle that their

long tails are seen streaming hither and thither in the wind, and the pressure of business is such that all possibility of a miserable debauch with opium is imperatively postponed till that barbarian Bull has got his tea. Such are a few of the common doings of the great army of clerks who fight the fight of commerce every day in London—with the exception of Sundays, and some few other welcome days set apart for rest—the whole year through.

He who would witness the matutinal gathering of this great army—and it is not an uninteresting sight—should rise betimes, and, having fortified himself with an early breakfast, direct his steps leisurely towards the Royal Exchange as the hour of gathering approaches. If, as he had better do, he starts from the suburbs, he will notice the early "buses" diverging from their customary routes, that is, the routes they travel during the rest of the day—and rousing with the sound of horn Johnson and Jackson, and Thomson and Dickson, and Richardson and Robinson, and Davidson and Jamieson, and Jenkinson and every mother's son of mighty Father Commerce, from their hot toast and cool watercresses and cosy fire-side breakfasts—drawing them out as with a magnet from their open street-doors, and receiving them in their capacious stomachs or on top of their broad backs, and bowling off with them towards the city. He will see others, a few minutes later, crossing now to this side of the road, now over again to that—"cutting" with a rough warning blast "tantara-ra-ra" up this turning to the right, and down the other to the left—pulling up at Smith's with a sharp sudden jerk to a dead stop, to enable him safely to deposit his seventeen stone with precautionary gravity, or barely slackening speed at the vision of Jones, who with the agility of a harlequin shoots himself into the farthest corner, carelessly ejaculating "All right!" as he takes his headlong flight. He will notice the conclusive "bang" with which the conductor jams to the door as he delivers himself of the satisfactory verdict, "Full

inside!" and will hardly fail to remark the aristocratic air with which both driver and conductor of the "bus" ignore altogether the eager gesticulations of the unfortunate Brown, who, already behind his time, frantically hails the unheeding driver, who with unbroken persistency rolls on regardless.

Besides the charioteers, he will notice the crowds of travellers on foot, and the accommodation provided for them by the morning crossing-sweepers, whose especial harvest has to be reaped at these morning hours, and who know full well their regular patrons, and acknowledge each one as he appears, accordingly, with a fraction of a *salaam* and a scratch of the ground with their broom-stumps. If he be a person of observation, he may discriminate unerringly between the man who has seized time by the forelock and him whom time is impatiently goading with the sharp point of his scythe. He may tell, too, the status, almost the actual salary, of every hired soldier in this numerous army, from the mere youth, just escaped from school, who with a *solatium* of a few pounds a year is feeling his way to promotion and a permanent stool, to him of three or four hundred a year, or perhaps more, who has got the world under his foot. He may note the undeniable gentility, the leisurely, half-lordly promenading step of the confidential manager, the conscience-keeper, as it were, of the thriving merchant, whose word or whose signature is as good as that of his principal; and he may contrast him with the hard-working drudge who, with a sickly wife and seven small children, in that mildewy cottage down in Bermondsey, is obliged to squeeze a genteel appearance out of very vulgar pay, and with the very best principles is yet obliged to play the turncoat because he cannot afford to patronize the tailor. He may see a great deal more if he look sharp, but he must not be long about it, because the scene changes as the clock strikes ten; in a few minutes the clerks are housed, the empty omnibuses roll off, and the grand army mounted on their stools are doing bloodless battle with all

nations of the earth—a friendly strife in which all are to be victors and gainers, save the idle and unprincipled, who shrink from the contest altogether, or, accepting it, fight with unlawful weapons.

So large an army of course needs a corresponding commissariat. Of the immense host that flock around the standard of commerce in the morning, some four-fifths, it has been calculated, heroically dine upon the field. Hence, wherever there is plenty of commerce in London, there also is plenty of cookery. The prices current in the city quote hot joints, pigeon pies, roast goose, cold sirloin and pickles, etc. etc., for this day's consumption, as well as corn, flour, bere, bigg, gutta percha, caoutchouc and indigo, and all the etceteras of the home and foreign markets. In the quiet back streets, roosting in the rear of the main thoroughfares of traffic, a thousand hospitable boards are spread with viands inviting to the casual passer-by, and of known and well-appreciated savour to the regular customer. Here, for a consideration, the unbearded youth from the boarding-school may speculate in unknown dishes, and the pampered *gastronome* discharge his critical verdict as to the culinary talent of the landlord's *chef-de-cuisine*. Enter any one of these resorts at a hungry moment—say any time between two and five o'clock in the afternoon—and if the love of order, of good cheer, and of well-bred company reside in your breast, and your olfactories be susceptible of persuasion by unimpeachable odours, you may chance to find yourself in an atmosphere of complacent comfortableness highly favourable to the important process of digestion. You will see, if you have not been unhappy in your choice of a dining-house, that the march of modern improvement has entered the cook-shop and transformed it into the *salon-à-manger* of our lively and luxurious neighbours across the Channel. It is literally a cook-shop no longer; the kitchen, with its compound of steaming and heterogeneous flavours, so disappetizing to the nervous sedentary *employée*,

is banished *in toto* from the place. Perhaps near a hundred members of the grand army are seated quietly round the snow-white table-cloths discussing at leisure the savoury meats or the delicate pastry, while the stilly hum of subdued voices in conversation, mingled with the clatter of knives and forks, and the occasional clink of glasses, are the only sounds that are heard. There is no scrambling of waiters, nor rushing of unctuous cook-maids either this way or that: a few polite young fellows with ever-watchful eyes, and feet noiselessly alert, present the bills of fare to the new comers as fast as they take their seats, receive their orders and transmit them, in accents which seldom reach your ear, through an acoustic tube to the regions below. In a few minutes, almost before you have time to bespeak the *Daily News* after that gentleman in green spectacles has done with it, the magical performances of Aladdin's wonderful lamp are repeated before your eyes: the genii below have obeyed the talismanic charm, and the desiderated dishes rise out of the ground "hot and hot" and anxious to be eaten. You may repeat the conjuration as often as you like, and if an experiment in roast beef should fail in convincing you that the thing was fairly done, why you can make another in plum-pudding; and should any lingering scepticism yet overshadow your perceptivities, (as the author of the "History of the Anglo-Saxons" has it,) you may possibly come to a sound and definite conclusion by a third experiment in custard. Having finished your dinner, and diluted the gastric juice with a crystal draught from St. Antholin's pump—for water is here in much repute as a beverage—you can cast your eye over the newspaper, and digest the leading article along with the sirloin, and when finally recruited both in body and mind, you take your departure. As you go out you pay; the landlord or his deputy meets you with a polite bow in the ante-room, and receives your money; he presents you with no account; he keeps none against you; he has perfect faith that the whole grand

army of clerks could hardly furnish a personage so mean who would rise from his hospitable board with a lie upon his lips, in order to defraud him of his dues. So you tell him what you have eaten, and he tells you what you have to pay; and the probability is, if you be a reasonable man and a stranger to this sort of accommodation, that you are very much surprised that for such a thing, say, as sixteen-pence, you have dined so comfortably and so well.

Houses of this description—and they are more numerous than a stranger to the city would be apt to imagine—owe their existence to the grand army. Without it they might extinguish their fires and discharge their staffs; when it disbands, which it does for the most part at six o'clock in the evening, and partly an hour earlier, the landlords may count their gains and prepare measures for the exigencies of the next day. The disbanding, by the way, of the commercial host is not nearly so noticeable an event as its gathering. The clerks do not affect a monopoly of the omnibuses in the evening; thousands of them, it is true, return home by that never-failing convenience, but thousands more devote their long evenings to pursuits and pleasures the appliances to which abound more in the city than in the suburbs. If some, lovers of home and home comforts, seek their own firesides in winter, in preference to all other allurements—and their own garden patches in summer, where the one rose-tree bears a blighted rose, the one gooseberry-bush bears no gooseberries, and the one vine never does anything more than promise grapes—an equal number at least seek a recompense for the toils of the day in recreations of a less healthful character.

The working-man who labours unremittingly from early morning till eight or nine at night is apt to imagine that the commercial clerk leads a very easy life, inasmuch as for the greater part of the year he has his long evenings at his own disposal. The supposition is not entirely a correct one, because there is no comparison between the labours of a clerk in

a responsible office, and those of a merely mechanical description. In matters of this sort things are very apt to find their own level; the faculties of the mind cannot be taxed for the same length of time as those of the body. A sedentary thinker who works seven or eight hours a day, in all likelihood makes a greater demand upon his vital energies than the handicraftsman who toils from rise to set of sun. Had the case been far otherwise, the fact would have been discovered long ere this, and a different balance struck. The object of most commercial regulations is not (we sometimes wish it were) to provide leisure for the workman, but to secure effective work from him; and we may take it for granted that that end has been kept in view as much in the clerk's case as in the day-labourer's. At the same time there is no denying that the clerk is favourably situated for the development of any peculiar talent with which he may have been endowed. The history of literature and the arts would supply abundant proof of this. We could point to eminent painters whose works are the admiration of the world — to musicians whose delightful strains bewitch the air, and charm the ear of millions — to poets and to literary men whose productions are read with avidity — all of whom once sat doggedly on the high leather stool, and manfully shed their ink like water in the cause of commerce. We shall content ourselves with adverting to one, the prince of literary clerks, poor Charles Lamb, for whom there will be a smile and a tear so long as English literature endures. Of his clerkly career there is a characteristic story told. He was in the habit too often of making his appearance late in the morning — too late for office hours. On one occasion his superior remonstrated with him candidly on the subject. Poor Charles, taken by surprise, replied with much *naïveté*: "True, my dear sir, true, I do sometimes come in late, but then you know *I always go away early*." We must close our article here. Anything we can say will sound but flat and tame after this.

THE "RIG" SALE.

THE reader must suppose it to be the dull time of the London year. London is, in fact, gone out of town, all but those unfortunates who, lacking the sinews of locomotion—surplus cash—have nothing to go with, and therefore nowhere to go to. The west end stands in stately silence; the tall rows of lordly residences blink darkly at each other through closed window-shutters; the broad pavements, glittering in the autumn sun, yield not an echo save to the plodding footfall of the milkman or the pot-boy.

> "No trampling of horses, no rumbling of wheels,
> No noise on the pavement of gentlemen's heels,"

disturbs the cogitations of the dreamy porter, who, having forsaken his cavern of buckram in the hall, ruminates cosily by the kitchen fire upon the two things which are inseparable in his catalogue of human vicissitudes—the sea-side and board-wages.

With the absence of fashion in the west the tradesman's function in the east correspondingly declines. In the Strand business has run aground, and desperate attempts are making to get it afloat again. Holborn is hipped, and stands at its front door, rubbing its brows, and pulling melancholy faces. Cheapside is now cheaper than ever, and strains with agonizing puffs to swell the canvas of traffic, and get the bark of commerce again under weigh. The less-frequented resorts of

trade are still worse off: in the second and third-rate thoroughfares the forlorn dealers are at their wits' end. They publish desperate announcements, and cry aloud through the press, though in less candid phrase, "Take my goods, oh take my goods, at any price you will—twenty, thirty, forty, fifty per cent. under prime cost—no matter what the fearful sacrifice—ruin me, or ruin my creditors, but grant me your custom, or I die." It is all of no use. The crowds that hurry past are of the wrong sort—money-seekers, not money-spenders: retail trade is at its last gasp. There is nothing for it but a "Rig," and a Rig is resolved upon.

Some fine morning Higgins the broker, telling the boy to take charge of the shop during his absence, jams his crumpled beaver over his unkempt locks, and thrusting his hands into his breeches' pockets, strolls out in a mood half melancholy, half savage, and looks in upon Wiggins the house-agent.

"How are *you*, Wiggins," says he, "and how's business with *you?*"

"No call to ask anybody that there question these here times, Mr. Higgins," says Wiggins; "most dreadful slack it is sure*ly*. Anything up?"

"Why, there is summut in the wind—leastways if you're agreeable, else I 'spose it aint no go."

"The old dodge I expect?"

"Why, not 'xactly; I seen Crossbar, and Pops, and Daubins, and Brittle last night, and all on us come to a noo plan. We means to have the Rig complete this time—leastways if you're agreeable, as I said afore."

"Well, I shan't hinder business, if you mean business; so let's hear?"

"Well, then, harn't you got a willar to let in St. John's Wood?"

"To be sure I have; what then?"

"Harn't it got stables in the back as opens in a mooze?"

"That's just it; what more?"

"Why, then, the question is, will you let us have that there willar for a few weeks, and what's your figger?"

As Wiggins has taken an oath against hindering business of any sort, and as the proprietor of the villa in requisition is an old lady at present retrenching in the south of France, it may be easily imagined that there are no insurmountable impediments to the conclusion of the bargain. Higgins having settled thus much, and obtained the key of the premises, proceeds to call upon his coadjutors in the Rig to play their several parts. Crossbar is an ironmonger, cutler, and hardwareman, and sends in fenders, fire-irons, kitchen-ware, cutlery, and bronze ornaments, &c. &c. Higgins himself carpets the rooms with second-hand Brussels, and crowds every chamber with a plethora of showy furniture—taking good care to prevent the ingress of too much light by a full depth of cornice, and abundance of damask drapery to the windows. Brittle, who is a chinaman, inundates the cupboards and sideboards with a flood of china and glass, made expressly for sale by auction, or for emigrants' uses. Pops, who is a pawnbroker in a large way of business, contributes the linen, an exuberant quantity of which is generally one of the characteristics of the Rig Sale. He happens to have on hand, on the present occasion, a good stock of plate of all descriptions, run out at old silver price, marked with an engraved crest, and the initials A. F. F. Epergnes, candelabras, tea and coffee services, spoons, and forks, with salvers and waiters to match, all are packed off to the "willar;" and a goodly show they make, spread forth upon Higgins's telescope dining-tables. Daubins, who is a picture-dealer in Wardour Street, takes the measure of the walls, and fills every available space with some "exquisite gem of art," manufactured in Brompton or Newman Street scarce a twelvemonth since, but figuring in the catalogue of the Rig Sale as the "choicest productions of the Italian, Spanish, Flemish, and English schools."

In three days the house is stuffed full from top to bottom

with everything that the most pampered selfishness could suggest, or wealth procure, all brought in under cover of the night, through the stables in the back, to prevent the suspicion of observant neighbours. Now appears a pompous advertisement in the daily papers, announcing the choicest effects (among which are included a thousand ounces of plate, and an unequalled collection of cabinet gems of art) of the Honourable Augustus Fitz-Flighaway, deceased, whose unimpeachable judgment, and liberal expenditure in amassing them are, it is added, well known in the world of fashion. The auctioneer, if not a member of the Rig, as is frequently the case, is at most a man of third-rate respectability in his profession, and receives a stated sum for his day's labour, in lieu of a percentage on the amount sold, which is generally charged. A large-type quarto catalogue is industriously circulated in the neighbourhood, and a few are despatched to Brighton, Hastings, and other marine resorts, whence the senders frequently receive commissions to purchase at the sale, at an exaggerated price, articles which had lain for years in their shops unsold.

At length the day of sale has arrived. Fathoms of stair-carpeting, studded with placards, hang trailing from the windows from an early hour in the morning, as an indication to all concerned that the day of business has dawned. The auctioneer on the present occasion is Mr. Snuffins of Seven Dials. Elevated on a chair placed on one end of the long dining-tables in the front parlour, the folding-doors of which have been removed from their hinges to throw the whole floor into one, the dark-muzzled orator, first treating the assembled public to a full view of his Blucher-booted heels through the legs of the little table in front of him, prepares to open the business. But before reciting his address, let us take a brief glance at the company. Higgins, Daubins, Crossbar, Pops, and Brittle, occupy five chairs in the first row, immediately under the eye of the auctioneer at his left. Wiggins, and an agent or two besides, are stationed at the other end of the

room; so that the assembly of *bonâ-fide* bidders are enclosed between them. Seated on chairs originally placed in rows, but now jostled in characteristic confusion, are thirty or forty respectable persons of both sexes, who have come with the praiseworthy intention of profiting by the decease of the Honourable Augustus Fitz-Flighaway. Upon the sofas, ranged on either side of the long tables in front of the auctioneer, are a still more select party, whose fashionable garb and demeanour have aroused the watchful politeness of the auctioneer's clerk, who has escorted them to seats at the table. Lounging about the doorway, and chattering occasionally with Wiggins, or one of his gang of touters, are some half-dozen furniture-brokers of the neighbourhood, not come with the view of purchasing — the Rig is as palpable to them as the sea is to a sailor — but induced by curiosity to see how it will go off, or to calculate the chance of profit from a similar experiment on their own account.

But the voice of Snuffins in alt is now heard above the murmur of conversation. "Now, then, gentlemen, yonder at that end of the room, silence, if *you* please: we are agoing to begin. Silence, let me beg, if *you* please (*three bangs with his hammer*). Ladies and gentlemen, these here heffects of the Horrible Augustus Fitz-Flighaway is, I 'spose, perfeckly well known to you, seein' the time they've abin on view. Many on you, I have no doubt (the rascal), who was hintimate with that celebrated person afore he deceased hisself, now reckonizes for the last time many a moniment of his indispensible taste and hexpensive disposition." (Here the orator attempts to draw up his right leg to the usual sitting-posture, and in so doing raises one side of the little table, and upsets his inkstand, the contents of which trickle down in a stream upon the head of his clerk, who is occupied for the next half-hour in conveying it by means of his middle finger to the back of his waistcoat.) "But, ladies and gentlemen, there aint no reason that this should be the last time that your eyes should

look on what's here. Every blessed lot on it is to be sold for just whot you chooses to give for it: there aint no reserve, and no favour. I needn't say that this is a hopportunity as don't happen every day, and aint likely to come again in a hurry. All I know is, that I should think it a good hundred pounds in my pocket if I could be a buyer to-day instead of a seller. These here remarks said and done, we will, if *you* please, proceed to the first lot."

With that up goes a wooden rocking-horse, which had been in Higgins's garret for the last three years; and after galloping up from ten shillings to three pound ten, is knocked down to Miss Clementina Botherbeau — a spinster of fifty-four, who has not a relation in the world under the age of twenty, but who would have it as a relic of the Hon. A. F. F., whom she has an idea she must have known and admired, though she cannot exactly recal his image to her mind.

As the lots are successively put up, they are started at moderate sums by the disinterested worthies in the front row of chairs; helped onwards towards the figure at which they stand doomed in the auctioneer's catalogue by the clique at the other end of the room; and, the limits agreed on once passed, are left to the competition of the public, who are not in the secret. Those which cannot by any means be pushed up to the price fixed, are bought in by their several owners, or their agents, to be removed at the end of the sale "back to the place from whence they came." The commissions are managed in a summary manner. The lots are rapidly run up to the price the absent principal will give: if they fetch more, they go to the person bidding more; if they are knocked down to the commissioned agent, who is often the owner, he gets for the articles the price at which they are sold, *plus* the commission, which, by a somewhat anomalous regulation, is generally a per-centage upon the amount paid for the lots.

But let us listen again to Snuffins. The furniture, we will

suppose, is all sold, and the pictures come next. Half-a-dozen time-tinted connoisseurs have entered the room within the last quarter of an hour, and found seats near the table, the ladies having departed.

Snuffins loquitur. The first work of hart, ladies and gentlemen, which I shall submit to your attention, is a reg'lar hex-quiz-it jim of Ten-years, a real shoved-over (meaning to say *chef-d'œuvre*), as the catalogue properly expresses it I'm give to understand private that it was bought by the Horrible A. F. F. agin Louis-Philippe, at the great sale in Paris as come off nine year ago. What do you say for this unparalleled production of Ten-years? Fifty guineas, shall I say, ladies and gentlemen? I beg your pardon, gentlemen—gentlemen only—the ladies is all gone—bless their liberal arts! —we shall have them again to-morrow, when the plate, and the linen, and the cheyny comes on. What shall I say, gentlemen, for the sperlative Ten-years? Forty guineas, shall I say?

A Voice. Two pounds.

"Two pounds did you say? Very well, thank you, sir; anything to begin with—Two pounds."

Daubins. Three pounds.

Wiggins. Three ten.

Daubins nods.

Snuffins. Four pounds.

An Old Gentleman. Five pounds. (The settled price: a dead silence.)

Second Old Gentleman. Let me see the picture—(*Takes off spectacles, and peers at it closely*)—Guineas.

Snuffins. Five guineas; selling at five—dead cheap at fifty.

The picture is ultimately knocked down at ten guineas to the first real bidder, having been painted from a print under Daubins's direction six months before, at a cost of not more than forty shillings. Had it been the picture it pretended to be, it would have fetched at a genuine sale, or at the "knock-

out" which customarily follows a genuine sale, at least from two to three hundred pounds. The Teniers is succeeded by a Hobbima, that by a Correggio, that by a Wilson, and that again by a Murillo, and so on till the catalogue is gone through, there being not one specimen in the whole batch which would answer any end better than that of showing the total want of judgment or knowledge of art in the purchaser.

The confederates are well pleased with the result of the first day's exploits. Daubins and Higgins are in high spirits. Crossbar shows his metal by proposing an extemporaneous supper on the premises, and a jollification is got up in the kitchen. Pops, whose profit is yet in perspective, is not quite so elate, and takes care to be temperate in his libations, that the morrow may not find him off his guard. Brittle, too, remains sober as a judge, and compares notes with Pops, and they arrange plans of mutual co-operation for the morrow. Daubins and Higgins get "drunk on the premises," to the great scandal of the other three, and especially of Crossbar, who, being proof against any quantity of "heavy," wonders what such fellows can be made of. An admonition from the policeman, who is attracted to the house by their noise, at length reminds the party that they are in a different region from Broker Row; and after "one glass more," or rather one more "pull" at the pewter-pot (for Brittle is too good a judge to allow his glass to be made use of), they break up, and betake themselves to their several homes.

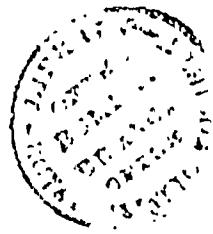
The second day's sale is even as the first, and still more productive. The experienced Snuffins had not miscalculated the "liberal arts" of the ladies. The china and glass, the linen and the plate of the Honourable Augustus Fitz-Flighaway becomes a perfect rage among the housekeepers of the neighbourhood. "As every lady," says the presiding orator, "is by nater a judge of these ere harticles, there aint no necessity for any remarks about 'em on my part. I puts 'em up and knocks 'em down; you, ladies, gives what you likes for 'em,

and has 'em. That's the long and the short of it." With this elegant exordium the business of the day commences. Under the patronage of the fair it goes on prosperously and well. Pops's second-hand linen brings him almost the price of new: the plate upon which he lent a fraction under five shillings an ounce, runs up to seven or eight, or even more. Now and then a lot is bought by a gentleman, and even a few are bought in by the owners, but the bulk of the articles find female purchasers, and either go to swell the list of bargains for which the buyers have no mortal use, or, being subjected to wear and tear, to prove the fallacious judgment of the excited bidders. The "real china" of Brittle, which all came overland from the home potteries, is bought up as a rarity; and the glass—which to be kept at all must be kept cool, as the ceremony of tempering has been omitted in its manufacture—is an object of strong competition among the fair householders, it being just the one thing of which no lady that we ever yet heard of was known to possess enough.

The effects of the supposititious deceased honourable are at length all disposed of, to the no small delectation of the concoctors of the Rig. A profit, varying from twenty to fifty per cent., has been realised by each of them, and they all unanimously declare that this time it was a "decent go, and *no* mistake." But it is not always that the Rig runs so prosperous a course. Though often highly productive, it is yet looked upon as a desperate measure. Sometimes, if the promoters are in bad odour among their brethren of the trade, an angry rival, or an excluded would-be participator, will expose the trick before half-a-dozen lots are sold, and he has either to be bribed to silence, or the thing becomes a failure. The Rig occasionally fails too from want of judgment in the selection of a proper locality for the experiment; not unfrequently less than ten per cent. of the lots are sold to real bidders; and in some instances, for which we could vouch, the amount of goods sold has not paid the auctioneer's charge for selling, to say nothing of other unavoidable expenses.

Sometimes the Rig is only partial—that is, it is confined to one or two rooms, or to a certain species of goods. In these cases it is curious to witness the perplexity of the brokers who happen not to be in the secret. That the Rig is being worked they know well enough from certain unmistakeable symptoms; that the whole is not a Rig they also know, from the number of knockers-out who are present, and they never venture upon a bidding until the desired information is obtained. Sometimes the first-floor front is a Rig; sometimes the two-pair back. Frequently the plate is rigged; more frequently the pictures. The watchful observer at a sale may detect the Rig portion of it from the demeanour of the regular buyers during its course. No sooner does the disposal of the Rig plant commence, than the whole fraternity of dealers contemptuously and manifestly ignore it altogether, those personally interested only excepted, and the lots are left to the competition of the unsuspecting public, whose courage receives an occasional fillip from the owners of the property or their agents; and it is not till the last Rig lot is knocked down, that the men of business condescend to bestow a glance at the auctioneer, or to listen to his repeated calls for silence, as the noise from their gossipping groups interrupts his proceedings.

It is hardly necessary to state that from respectable auctioneers, men of character and integrity, the Rig receives no countenance. If, indeed, the choice collections of valuables of every description, gathered together by men of wealth and taste, who have devoted their lives to the task, were allowed to be tampered with and adulterated by the addition of any trumpery from the stocks of ignorant and peculant dealers, the public would have no guarantee for the genuineness of anything they bought. The Rig is born of stagnation of trade, and dies a natural death when commerce becomes brisk, and the demand for things saleable returns to its accustomed level.



PUFF AND PUSH.

It is said that everything is to be had in London. There is truth enough in the observation; indeed, rather too much. The conviction that everything is to be had, whether you are in want of it or not, is forced upon you with a persistence that becomes oppressive; and you find that, owing to everything being so abundantly plentiful, there is one thing which is *not* to be had, do what you will, though you would like to have it if you could—and that one thing is just one day's exemption from the persecutions of Puff in its myriad shapes and disguises. But it is not to be allowed; all the agencies that will work at all are pressed into the service of pushing and puffing traffic; and we are fast becoming, from a nation of shopkeepers, a nation in a shop. If you walk abroad, it is between walls swathed in puffs; if you are lucky enough to drive your gig, you have to "cut in and out" between square vans of crawling puffs; if, alighting, you cast your eyes upon the ground, the pavement is stencilled with puffs; if in an evening stroll you turn your eye towards the sky, from a paper balloon the clouds drop puffs. You get into an omnibus, out of the shower, and find yourself among half a score of others, buried alive in puffs; you give the conductor sixpence, and he gives you three pennies in change, and you are forced to pocket a puff, or perhaps two, stamped indelibly on the copper coin of the realm. You wander out into the

country, but the puffs have gone thither before you, turn in what direction you may; and the green covert, the shady lane, the barks of columned beeches and speckled birches, of gnarled oaks and rugged elms—no longer the mysterious haunts of nymphs and dryads, who have been driven far away by the omnivorous demon of the shop—are all invaded by Puff, and subdued to the office of his ministering spirits. Puff, in short, is the monster megatherium of modern society, who runs rampaging about the world, his broad back in the air, and his nose on the ground, playing all sorts of ludicrous antics, doing very little good, beyond filling his own insatiable maw, and nobody knows how much mischief in accomplishing that.

Push is an animal of a different breed, naturally a thorough-going, steady, and fast-trotting hack, who mostly keeps in the Queen's highway, and knows where he is going. Unfortunately, he is given to break into a gallop now and then; and whenever in this vicious mood, is pretty sure to take up with Puff, and the two are apt to make wild work of it when they scamper abroad together. The worst of it is, that nobody knows which is which of these two termagant tramplers: both are thoroughly protean creatures, changing shapes and characters, and assuming a thousand different forms every day; so that it is a task all but impossible to distinguish one from the other. Hence a man may get upon the back of either without well knowing whither he will be carried, or what will be the upshot of his journey.

Dropping our parable, and leaving the supposed animals to run their indefinite career, let us take a brief glance at some of the curiosities of the science of Puffing and Pushing—for both are so blended, that it is impossible to disentangle one from the other—as it is carried on at the present hour in the metropolis.

The business of the shopkeeper, as well as of all others who have goods to sell, is of course to dispose of his wares as

rapidly as possible, and in the dearest market. This market he has to create, and he must do it in one of two ways; either he must succeed in persuading the public, by some means or other, that it is to their advantage to deal with him, or he must wait patiently and perseveringly until they have found that out, which they will inevitably do if it is a fact. No shop ever pays its expenses, as a general rule, for the first ten or twenty months, unless it be literally crammed down the public throat by the instrumentality of the press and the hoarding; and it is therefore a question, whether it is cheaper to wait for a business to grow up, like a young plant, or to force it into sudden expansion by artificial means. When a business is manageable by one or two hands, the former expedient is the better one, and as such is generally followed, after a little preliminary advertising, to apprise the neighbourhood of its whereabouts. But when the proprietor has an army of assistants to maintain and to salarise, the case is altogether different; the expense of waiting, perhaps for a couple of years, would swallow up a large capital. On this account, he finds it more politic to arrest the general attention by a grand stir in all quarters, and some obtrusive demonstration palpable to all eyes, which shall blazon his name and pretensions through every street and lane of mighty London. Sometimes it is a regiment of foot, with placarded banners; sometimes one of cavalry, with bill-plastered vehicles and bands of music; sometimes it is a phalanx of bottled humanity, crawling about in labelled triangular phials of wood, corked with woful faces; and sometimes it is all these together, and a great deal more besides. By this means he conquers reputation, as a despot sometimes carries a throne, by a *coup d'état*, and becomes a celebrity at once to the million, among whom his name is infinitely better known than those of the greatest benefactors of mankind. All this might be tolerable enough if it ended here; but, unhappily, it does not. Experiment has shown that, just as gudgeons will bite at anything

when the mud is stirred up at the bottom of their holes, so the ingenuous public will lay out their money with anybody who makes a prodigious noise and clatter about the bargains he has to give. The result of this discovery is, the wholesale daily publication of lies of most enormous calibre, and their circulation, by means which we shall briefly notice, in localities where they are likely to prove most productive.

The advertisements in the daily or weekly papers, the placards on the walls or hoardings, the perambulating vans and banner-men, and the doomed hosts of bottle-imps and extinguishers, however successful each may be in attracting the gaze and securing the patronage of the multitude, fail, for the most part, of enlisting the confidence of a certain order of customers, who, having plenty of money to spend, and a considerable share of vanity to work upon, are among the most hopeful fish that fall into the shopkeeper's net. These are the female members of a certain order of families—the amiable and genteel wives and daughters of the commercial aristocracy, and their agents, of this great city. They reside throughout the year in the suburbs: they rarely read the newspapers; it would not be genteel to stand in the streets spelling over the bills on the walls; and the walking and riding equipages of puffing are things decidedly low in their estimation. They must, therefore, be reached by some other means; and these other means are before us as we write, in the shape of a pile of circular-letters in envelopes of all sorts —plain, hot-pressed, and embossed; with addresses—some in manuscript, and others in print—some in a gracefully genteel running-hand, and others decidedly and rather obtrusively official in character, as though emanating from government authorities—each and all, however, containing the bait which the lady-gudgeon is expected to swallow. Before proceeding to open a few of them for the benefit of the reader, we must apprise him of a curious peculiarity which marks their delivery. Whether they come by post, as the major part of them

do, not a few of them requiring a double stamp, or whether they are delivered by hand, one thing is remarkable—*they always come in the middle of the day*, between the hours of eleven in the forenoon and five in the afternoon, when, as a matter of course, the master of the house is not in the way. Never, by any accident, does the morning-post, delivered in the suburbs between nine and ten, produce an epistle of this kind. Let us now open a few of them, and learn from their contents what is the shopkeeper's estimate of the gullibility of the merchant's wife, or his daughter, or of the wife or daughter of his managing clerk.

The first that comes to hand is addressed thus: "No. 2795.—DECLARATIVE NOTICE.—*From the Times, August* 15, 1851." The contents are a circular, handsomely printed on three crowded sides of royal quarto glazed post, and containing a list of articles for peremptory disposal, under unheard-of advantages, on the premises of Mr. Gobblemadam, at No. 541, New Ruin Street. Without disguising anything more than the addresses of these puffing worthies, we shall quote *verbatim* a few paragraphs from their productions. The catalogue of bargains in the one before us comprises almost every species of textile manufacture, as well native as foreign—among which silks, shawls, dresses, furs, and mantles are the most prominent; and amazing bargains they are—witness the following extracts:

"A marvellous variety of fancy silks, cost from 4 to 5 guineas each, will be sold for £1 19s. 6d. each.

Robes of damas and broche (foreign), cost 6 guineas, to be sold for 2½ guineas.

Embroidered muslin robes, newest fashion, cost 18s 9d., to be sold for 9s. 6d.

Worked lace dresses, cost 35s., to be sold at 14s. 9d.

Do. do. cost 28s. 6d., to be sold at 7s. 6d.

Newest dresses, of fashionable materials, worth 35s., to be sold for 9s. 9d.

Splendid Paisley shawls, worth 2½ guineas, for 16s.

Cashmere shawls (perfect gems), cost 4 guineas, to be sold for 35s."

A long list of similar bargains closes with a declaration that, although these prices are mentioned, a clearance of the premises, rather than a compensation for the value of the goods, is the great object in view; that the articles will be got rid of regardless of price; and that "*the disposal will assume the character of a gratuitous distribution, rather than of an actual sale.*" This is pretty well for the first hap-hazard plunge into the half-bushel piled upon our table. Mr. Gobblemadam may go down. Let us see what the next will produce.

The second is addressed thus: "*To be opened within two hours after delivery.*—SPECIAL COMMISSION.—*Final Audit, 30th October,* 1851." The contents are a closely-printed extra-royal folio broadside, issued by the firm of Messrs. Shavelass and Swallowher, of Tottering Terrace West. It contains a voluminous list of useful domestic goods, presenting the most enormous bargains, in the way of sheetings, shirtings, flannels, diapers, damasks, dimities, table-cloths, &c. &c. The economical housewife is cautioned by this generous firm, that to disregard the present opportunity would be the utmost excess of folly, as the whole stock is to be peremptorily sold considerably *under half the cost price.* The following are a few of the items:

"Irish linens, warranted genuine, 9½d. per yard.

Fine cambric handkerchiefs, 2s. 6d. per dozen.

Curtain damask, in all colours, 6½d. per yard.

Swiss curtains, elegantly embroidered, four yards long, for 6s. 9d. a pair—cost 17s. 6d.

Drawing-room curtains, elaborately wrought, at 8s. 6d. a pair—cost 21s."

The bargains, in short, as Messrs. Shavelass and Swallow-her observe, are of such an astounding description, as "to strike all who witness them with wonder, amazement, and surprise;" and "demand inspection from every lady who desires to unite superiority of taste with genuine quality and economy."

The next is a remarkably neat envelope, with a handsomely embossed border, bearing the words, "ON ESPECIAL SERVICE" under the address, and winged with a two-penny stamp. The enclosure is a specimen of fine printing on smooth, thin vellum, in the form of a quarto catalogue, with a deep, black-bordered title-page, emanating from the dreary establishment of Messrs. Moan and Groan, of Cypress Row. Here commerce condescends to sympathy, and measures forth to bereaved and afflicted humanity the outward and visible symbols of their hidden griefs. Here, when you enter his gloomy penetralia, and invoke his services, the sable-clad and cadaverous-featured shopman asks you, in a sepulchral voice—we are not writing romance, but simple fact—whether you are to be suited for inextinguishable sorrow, or for mere passing grief; and if you are at all in doubt upon the subject, he can solve the problem for you, if you lend him your confidence for the occasion. He knows from long and melancholy experience the agonising intensity of woe expressed by bombazine, crape, and Paramatta; can tell to a sigh the precise amount of regret that resides in a black bonnet; and can match any degree of internal anguish with its corresponding shade of colour, from the utter desolation and inconsolable wretchedness of dead and dismal black, to the transient sentiment of sorrowful remembrance so appropriately symbolised by the faintest shade of lavender or French gray. Messrs. Moan and Groan know well enough, that when the heart is burdened with sorrow, considerations of economy are likely to be banished from the mind as out of place, and disrespectful to the memory of the departed; and, therefore, they do not affront

their sorrowing patrons with the sublunary details of pounds, shillings, and pence. They speed on the wings of the post to the house of mourning, with the benevolent purpose of comforting the afflicted household. They are the first, after the stroke of calamity has fallen, to mingle the business of life with its regrets; and to cover the woes of the past with the allowable vanities of the present. Step by step, they lead their melancholy patrons along the meandering margin of their flowing pages—from the very borders of the tomb, through all the intermediate changes by which sorrow publishes to the world its gradual subsidence, and land them at last, in the sixteenth page, restored to themselves and to society, in the front-box of the Opera, glittering in "splendid head-dresses in pearl," in "fashionably elegant turbans," and in "dress-caps trimmed with blonde and Brussels lace." For such benefactors to womankind—the dears—of course no reward can be too great; and, therefore, Messrs. Moan and Groan, strong in their modest sense of merit, make no parade of prices. They offer you all that in circumstances of mourning you can possibly want; they scorn to do you the disgrace of imagining that you would drive a bargain on the very brink of the grave; and you are of course obliged to them for the delicacy of their reserve on so commonplace a subject, and you pay their bill in decorous disregard of the amount. It is true, that certain envious rivals have compared them to birds of prey, scenting mortality from afar, and hovering like vultures on the trail of death, in order to profit by his dart; but such "caparisons," as Mrs. Malaprop says, "are odorous," and we will have nothing to do with them.

The next, and the last we shall examine, ere Betty claims the whole mass to kindle her fires, is a somewhat bulky envelope, addressed in a neat hand: *To the Lady of the House.* It contains a couple of very voluminous papers, almost as large as the broad page of *The Times*, one of which adverts myste-

riously to some appalling calamity which has resulted in a "most DISASTROUS FAILURE, productive of the most *intense excitement* in the commercial world." We learn further on, that from various conflicting circumstances, which the writer does not condescend to explain, above £150,000 worth of property has come into the hands of Messrs. Grabble and Grab, of Smash Place, "which they are resolute in summarily disposing of *on principles commensurate with the honourable position they hold in the metropolis.*" Then follows a list of tempting bargains, completely filling both the broad sheets. Here are a few samples:

"Costly magnificent long shawls, manufactured at £6, to be sold for 18s. 6d.
Fur victorines, usually charged 18s. 6d., to sell at 1s. 3d.
2,500 shawls (Barège), worth 21s. each, to sell at 5s.
Embroidered satin shawls (magnificent), value 20 guineas each, to be sold for 3 guineas."

The reader is probably satisfied by this time of the extraordinary cheapness of these inexhaustible wares, which thus go begging for purchasers in the bosoms of families. It is hardly necessary to inform him, that all these enormous pretensions are so many lying delusions, intended only to bring people in crowds to the shop, where they are effectually fleeced by the jackals in attendance. If the lady reader doubt the truth of our assertion, let her go for once to the establishment of Messrs. Grabble and Grab last named. An omnibus from any part of the city or suburbs will, as the circular informs you, set you down at the door. Upon entering the shop, you are received by a polite inquiry from the "walker" as to the purpose of your visit. You must say something in answer to his torrent of civility, and you probably name the thing you want, or at least which you are willing to have at the price named in the sheet transmitted to you through the post. Suppose you utter the word "shawl." "This way, madam," says he; and forthwith leads you a long dance to the end of the coun-

ter, where he consigns you over to the management of a plausible genius invested with the control of the shawl department. You have perhaps the list of prices in your hand, and you point out the article you wish to see. The fellow shows you fifty things for which you have no occasion, in spite of your reiterated request for the article in the list. He states his conviction in a flattering tone that *that* article would not become you, and recommends those he offers as incomparably superior. If you insist, which you rarely can, he is at length sorry to inform you that the article is unfortunately just now out of stock, depreciating it at the same time as altogether beneath *your* notice; and in the end succeeds in cramming you with something which you don't want, and for which you pay from 15 to 20 per cent. more than your own draper would have charged you for it.

The above extracts are given in illustration of the last new discovery in the science of puffing—a discovery by which, through the agency of the press, the penny-post, and the last new London Directory, the greatest rogues are enabled to practise upon the simplicity of our better-halves, while we think them secure in the guardianship of home. We imagine that, practically, this science must be now pretty near completion. Earth, air, fire, and water, are all pressed into the service. It has its painters, and poets, and literary staff, from the bard who tunes his harp to the praise of the pantaloons of the great public benefactor Noses, to the immortal professoress of crochet and cross-stitch, who contracts for £120 a year to puff in "The Family Fudge" the super-excellent knitting and boar's-head cotton of Messrs. Steel and Goldseye. It may be that something more is yet within the reach of human ingenuity. It remains to be seen whether we shall at some future time find puffs in the hearts of lettuces and summer-cabbages, or shell them from our green-peas and Windsor beans. It might be brought about, perhaps, were the market-gardeners enlisted in the cause; the only question is, whether it could be made to pay.

BUBBLE COMPANIES.

WHAT is to be done with the money which is realized in the ordinary course of affairs, has latterly become a kind of puzzle. There it goes on accumulating as a result of industry; but what then? A person can but eat one dinner in the day; two or three coats are about all he needs for the outer man; he can but live in one house at a time; and, in short, after paying away all he needs to pay, he finds that he has got a little over for — investment. Since our young days, this word investment has come remarkably into use. All are looking for investments; and as supply ordinarily follows demand, up there rise, at periodical intervals, an amazing number of plans for the said investments — in plain English, relieving people of their money. A few years ago, railways were the favourite absorbents. Railways, on a somewhat more honest principle, may possibly again have their day. Meanwhile, the man of money has opened up to him a very comprehensive field for the investment of his cash: he can send it upon any mission he chooses; he may dig turf with it, or he may dig gold; he may catch whales, or he may catch sprats, or do fifty other things; but if he see it again after having relinquished his hold upon it, he must have exercised more discretion than falls to the lot of the majority of Her Majesty's lieges in their helter-skelter steeple-chasing after twenty per cent. Our present business, however, is not with legitimate speculation, but

with schemes in which no discretion is exercised, or by which discretion is set to sleep — in a word, with bubble investments; and the history of many of the most promising of these speculations may be read in the following brief and not altogether mythical biography, of an interesting specimen which suddenly fell into a declining way, and is supposed to have lately departed this life.

The long Range Excavator Rock-Crushing and Gold-Winning Company was born from the brain of Aurophilus Dobrown, Esq., of Smallchange Dell, in the county of Middlesex, between the hours of ten and eleven at night on the 14th of October, 1851. It was at first a shapeless and unpromising bantling; but being introduced to the patronage of a conclave of experienced drynurses, it speedily became developed in form and proportion; and before it was ten days old, was formally introduced, with official garniture, to the expectant public, by whom it was received with general approbation and favour. The new company, in a dashing prospectus, held forth a certain prospect of enormous advantages to shareholders, with an entire exemption from responsibility of every sort. The shares were a million in number, at one pound each, without any further call — on the loose-cash principle, and no signing of documents. Aurophilus Dobrown was chairman of the committee of management.

The intentions of the company, as detailed at length in their eloquent prospectus, were to invade the gold regions of the Australian continent with a monster engine, contrived by the indefatigable Crushcliff, and which, it was confidently expected, would devour the soil of the auriferous district at a rate averaging about three tons per minute. It was furnished, so the engineer averred, with a stomach of 250 tons capacity, supplied with peristaltic grinders of steel of the most obdurate temper, enabling it with ease to digest the hardest granite rocks, to crush the masses of quartz into powder, and to deposit the virgin gold upon a sliding floor underneath. The machine

was to be set in motion by the irresistible force of "the pressure from without," and 1000 pounds-weight of pure gold per diem was considered a very low estimate of its powers of production. These reasonable expectations being modestly set forth in circulars and public advertisements, and backed by the august patronage of the respectable and responsible individuals above named, the Long Range Excavator Company speedily grew into vast repute. The starving herd encamped in Stagg's Alley, flew at once to pen, ink, and paper, and applications for shares poured in by thousands. Referees were hunted up, or they were not — that is no great matter. Half a million of the shares were duly allotted; and that done, to the supreme delectation of the stags, Mr. Stickemup the broker, in conjunction with his old friend and colleague Mr. Knockemoff, fixed the price of shares by an inaugural transaction of considerable amount, at twenty-five per cent. above par, at which they went off briskly. Now were the stags to be seen flying in every direction, eager to turn a penny before the inevitable hour appointed for payment of the shares. It was curious to observe the gradual wane of covetousness in the cerval mind; how, as the fateful hour approached, their demand for profit grew small by degrees and beautifully less. From 4s. premium per share to 3s.; from 3s. to 2s.; from 2s. to 1s.; and thence to such a thing as 9d., 8d., 7d., and still downwards, till, as the hand of the dial verged upon the closing stroke of the bell, they condescended to resign their Long Range Excavators to the charge of buyers who *could* pay for the shares they held. The company was now fairly afloat. By the aid of

> "A few clever riggers to put on the pot,
> To stir it round gently, and serve while 'twas hot."

the shares rose higher than had been expected. Aurophilus Dobrown sold his 50,000 at a handsome premium, and realised what he was pleased privately to term "something substantial" by the speculation. The public became enthusiastic

on the subject of the Long Range Excavators, and for a few short weeks they were the favourite speculation of the market. By and by, however, a rumour began to be whispered about on the subject of the monster-machine, the stomach of which, it was secretly hinted, was alarmingly out of order, and resisted all the tonics of the engineer. It was currently reported among parties most interested, that from late experiments made, previous to embarkation, it had been ascertained beyond a doubt, that though the peristaltic apparatus digested pints with perfect ease, it yet rejected quartz — a defect which it was but too plain would be fatal to the production of gold. The effect of this rumour was most alarmingly depressing upon the value of the shares. In a few days they fell fifty per cent. below par, with few buyers even at that. At this juncture it was discovered, that one of the directors was actively bearing the market; but the discovery was not made before that disinterested personage, who had previously disposed of the whole of his original allotment at a handsome premium, had secured above 10,000 new shares at a cost of about half their upset value. A colleague openly accused him of this disgraceful traffic at a general meeting of the directors, and declared that he had not words to express his disgust at one who, for the sake of his own personal profit, could condescend to depreciate the property of his constituents. The accused retorted, and the meeting growing stormy and abusive, ended late at night with closed doors.

A few days after, affairs again began to take a turn upwards. The failure of the engine was declared to be an erroneous and altogether unfounded report. It was boldly asserted, that the small model-engine of one inch to the foot, had actually crushed several masses of Scotch granite, and eliminated seven or eight ounces of pure metal; and these specimens were exhibited under a glass-case in the office of the company, in proof of their triumphant success. Now the shares rose again as rapidly as they had lately fallen, and honourable gentlemen

who had held on, had an opportunity of turning themselves round. It is to be supposed that some of them at least did that to their satisfaction; at any rate, the respectable and responsible concoctors of the Long Range Excavator Rock-Crushing and Gold-Winning Company very soon began to turn their backs upon the public altogether. By degrees, the whole body of directors, trustees, counsel, and agents, dwindled down to a solitary clerk paring his nails in a deserted office. Shares at a discount of 60, 70, 80, 90 per cent. attested the decline of the speculation. Honourable gentlemen were reported to have gone upon their travels. The office was at first "temporarily closed," and then let to the new company for Bridging the Dardanelles on the Tubular Principle. The engine of the Long Range Excavators, according to the last report, had foundered — but whether in the brain of Crushcliff, the engineer, or on the Scilly Rocks, we could not clearly make out. The only one of the original promoters who has latterly condescended to gratify the gaze of the public, is the Baron Badlihoff, who, a few days ago made his appearance on the monkey-board of an omnibus, whence he was suddenly escorted by policeman B. 1001, to the presence of a magistrate, who unsympathisingly transferred him to Clerkenwell Jail, for certain paltry threepenny defalcations, due to a lapse of memory which our shameful code persists in regarding as worthy of incarceration and hard labour. He is now an active member of a company legally incorporated under government sanction, for grinding the wind upon the revolving principle. It is not precisely known when the first dividend on the Long Range Excavators will be declared. Sanguine speculators in the L. R. E. and the Thames Conflagration Company, expect to draw both dividends on the same day. In the meantime, the books are safe in the custody of Messrs. Holdem Tight and Brass, of Thieves' Inn; and ill-natured people are not wanting, who insinuate that they constitute the only property available for the benefit of the shareholders.

Let us now take a glance at a snug little commercial bubble, blown into being by "highly respectable men," a private affair altogether, which never had a name upon 'Change, and was managed — we cannot say to the satisfaction of all parties — by the originating contrivers, without making any noise in the papers, or exciting public attention in any way. We will call it, for the sake of a name, "The Babel and Lowriver Steam Navigation Company." Lowriver is a pleasant, genteel little village, which has of late years sprung suddenly into existence on the coast of ——shire, and has been growing, for the last seven years, with each succeeding summer, more and more a place of favourite resort with the inhabitants of Babel. Mr. Montague Whalebone took an early liking to the place, and built a row of goodly houses by the water-side, and a grand hotel at the end of the few stumps of pitchy stakes dignified by the name of the pier. But the hotel lacked customers, and the houses wanted tenants; and the whole affair threatened to fall a prey to river-fog and mildew, when the Babel and Lowriver Steam Navigation Company came to the rescue, and placed it upon a permanent and expansive footing. Of the original constitution of this snug company, it is not easy to say anything with certainty. All we know is, that, some seven years ago, it was currently spoken of in private circles as a capital investment for money, supposing only that shares could be got: *that* was the difficult thing. Large dividends were to be realized by building four steamers, and running them between Babel and Lowriver. Upon the neat hot-pressed prospectus, privately and sparingly circulated — it was whispered that it was too good a thing to go a begging — appeared the names of Erebus Carbon, Esq., of Diamond Wharf; of Montague Whalebone, Esq., of Lowriver; of Larboard Starboard, Esq., ship-builder; and Piston Rodd, Esq., of the firm of Boiler & Rodd, engineers, as directors. The shares were £20 each, liable to calls, though no calls were anticipated; and it was reckoned an enormous favour

to get them. Traffic in shares was discountenanced; the company had no wish to be regarded as a cluster of speculators, but rather as a band of brothers, co-operating together for their common benefit. Of course, the necessary legal formalities were gone through — that could not safely be dispensed with.

In spite of the difficulty of obtaining shares, a pretty large number of them got into the hands of the respectable portion of the public, and the whole were soon taken up. The boats were built by Larboard Starboard, Esq.; and the engines, as a matter of course, were put on board by Messrs Boiler & Rodd; Erebus Carbon, Esq., supplied, at the current rates, the necessary fuel; and at all hours of the day the vessels ran backwards and forwards, carrying customers to Mr. Montague Whalebone's hotel, and lodgers to the new tenements, which soon began to rise around it in all directions. Lowriver took amazingly, and rose rapidly in public estimation; the boats filled well, and the speculation promised great things. When, however, after several months of undeviating prosperity, the shareholders began to look for some return for their capital in the shape of a dividend, each one of them was individually surprised by a "call;" £5 a share was wanted to clear off urgent responsibilities. "The outfitting costs had been greater than was foreseen," and the demands upon the shareholders were not likely to be limited to the first call. The victims rushed, as they were invited to do, to the office, to inspect the accounts. The engineer was there to receive them, and, all suavity and politeness, submitted every fact and figure to their investigation. There was nothing to be found fault with — everything was fairly booked; but there was a heavy balance dead against the company. The engineer himself put a long face upon the affair, and shrugged his shoulders, and mumbled something about having burned his own fingers, &c. After this, reports soon got abroad very prejudicial to the value of the investments. Then

came the winter, during which few passengers travelled to Lowriver; and with Christmas came another £5 call. People grew tired of paying twenty per cent. for nothing, and many forfeited their shares by suffering them to be sold to pay the calls. This game went on for nearly three years — all "calls" and no dividends; until at length it would have been difficult to find five persons out of the original five hundred who held shares in the Babel and Lowriver Steam Navigation Company, and there was next to nobody left to *call* upon.

Years have rolled on since then. Lowriver has grown into a popular and populous marine summer residence. Mr. Montague Whalebone, who knew what he was about, having bought and leased the building-ground, has become the owner of a vast property, increasing in value every day. Larboard Starboard, Esq., is on the way to become a millionaire, and has several new boats building for the company's service at the present moment. Messrs. Boiler & Rodd have quintupled their establishment, and are in a condition to execute government contracts. Erebus Carbon, Esq., has found a market in the company for hundreds of thousands of tons of coal, and, from keeping a solitary wharf, has come to be the owner of a fleet of colliers. At this hour the company consists of six individuals — the four original projectors, and a couple of old codgers — "knowing files," who had the penetration, in the beginning, to see through the "bearing dodge," and would not be beaten or frightened off. They paid up every call upon shares, and bought others — and then, by showing a bold front, asserted a voice in the management, and crushed in to a full and fair share of the profits. They have made solid fortunes by the speculation; while the original shareholders, whose money brought the company into existence, have reaped nothing but losses and vexation in return for their capital.

But enough, and more than enough, on the score of the delusive farces which, with pretences almost as transparent as the above, are from time to time played off for the purpose of

easing the public of their superfluous cash. Let us glance briefly at a speculation of a different kind, no less a bubble as it proved, but one whose tragic issues have already wrought the wreck of many innocent families, and which, at the present moment, under the operation of the Winding-up Act, is darkening with ruin and the fear of ruin a hundred humble abodes. We have good reason to know its history too well; and we shall, in as few words as possible, present the facts most important to be known to the reader's consideration, with the view of inculcating caution by the misfortunes of others, and showing at the same time how possible it is, under the present law regulating joint-stock partnerships, for an honest man, by the most inadvertent act, to entail misery upon himself, and destitution upon his offspring.

It is some fifteen or twenty years ago, since a company of two or three speculative geniuses issued a plan for establishing, in a delightful glen situated but a few miles from a well-known Welsh port in the Bristol Channel, a brewery upon an extensive scale. The prospectus, as a matter of course, promised to the shareholders the usual golden advantages. The crystal current which meandered through the valley was to be converted into malt-liquor—so great were the natural and artificial advantages which combined to effect that result—at one-half the cost of such a transformation in any other locality; and the liquor produced was to be of such exquisite relish and potency, that all Britain was to compete for its possession. So plausible was everything made to appear, that men of commercially acquired fortune, of the greatest experience, and of long-tried judgment, invested their capital in the fullest confidence of success. Following their example, tradesmen and employers did the same; and, in imitation of their betters, numbers of persons of the classes of small shopkeepers and labouring-men invested their small savings in shares in the "Romantic Valley Brewery." The number of joint-proprietors amounted in all to some hundreds, holding £20 shares

in numbers proportioned to their means or their speculative spirit. Not one in fifty of them knew anything of the art of brewing, or had any knowledge of the locality where the scheme was to be carried out; but no doubt was entertained of the speedy and great success which was promised.

The land was bought, the necessary buildings were substantially erected, and the three principal concocters of the scheme, one of whom was a lawyer, were appointed to manage the concern, and empowered to borrow money in case it should be wanted, to complete the plant, and to work it until the profits came in. They had every advantage for the production of a cheap and superior article: labour, land-carriage, and water-carriage, were all at a low charge in the neighbourhood, and materials, upon the whole, rated rather under than over the average. Year after year, however, passed away, and not a farthing of dividend came to the shareholders; promises only of large profits at some future period—that was all. It happened that none of the shareholders had invested any very large sums, and this was thought a fortunate circumstance, as none of them felt very deeply involved. The rich had speculated with their superfluity, and they could bear to joke on the subject of the Romantic Valley, though they shook their heads when the supposed value of the shares was hinted at. The poor felt it more, and some of the neediest sold their single shares or half-shares at a terrible discount, while they would yet realise something. As time rolled on, several of the older proprietors died off, and willed away, with the rest of their property, the Romantic Valley Brewery shares to their friends and relatives. A considerable number of them thus passed from the first holders to the hands of others, one and all of whom naturally accepted the legacies devised to them, and gave the necessary signatures to the documents which made the shares their own.

Meanwhile, the managers went on working an unprofitable business, borrowing money on the credit of the joint pro-

prietors; and in the face of all the advantages upon which they plumed themselves, plunged deeper and deeper into debt, until, being forced to borrow at a high rate of interest to pay for the use of former loans, they found their credit, in the thirteenth year of their existence, completely exhausted; and then the bubble burst at once in ruin, utter and complete, overwhelming all who were legally connected with it, either by original purchase, by transfer, or by inheritance. Independent country gentlemen, west-country manufacturers, and merchants of substantial capital, were summarily pounced upon by the fangs of the law, and all simultaneously stripped of everything they possessed in the world. Professional men, the fathers of families genteely bred and educated, were summarily bereft of every farthing, and condemned in the decline of life to begin the world afresh. Not a few, seized with mortal chagrin at the horrible consummation of an affair which had never been anything but a source of loss and annoyance, sunk at once into the grave. Others—accustomed perhaps for half a century to the appliances of ease and luxury, and who were the owners of hospitable mansions, the centres of genteel resort—at the present moment hide their heads in cottages, and huts, and eleemosynary chambers, where they wither in silence and neglect under the cold breath of alien charity. Some, at threescore, are driven forth from a life of indulgence and inactivity, to earn their daily bread. Young and rising tradesmen, who had had the misfortune to inherit from a relative or a patron but a few shares, or even a single one, saw themselves at once precipitated into bankruptcy. One case, for which we can personally vouch, is beyond measure distressing: a gentleman of good fortune dying, had bequeathed to each of a large family of daughters a handsome provision; shortly before the bursting of the fearful bubble, the mother also died, dividing by will her own fortune among the young ladies, and leaving to each one a few shares in the Romantic Valley Brewery. The transference of these shares

to the several children made the whole of them liable to the extent of their entire property; and the whole six unfortunates were actually beggared to the last farthing, and cast upon the world to shift as they might. To detail the domestic desolation caused by this iniquitous affair, would require the space of a large volume. It has wrought nothing but wretchedness and ruin to those to whom it promised unexampled prosperity, and it is yet working still more—nor is it likely to stop, for aught that we can see, so long as it presents a mark for legal cupidity. All that could be got for the creditors has been extorted long ago from the wealthier portion of the victims; but the loans are not yet all liquidated, and the claim yet remaining unsatisfied, is now the pretext under which the lawyers are sucking the life-blood from the hard-working and struggling class of shareholders, who, while industriously striving for a respectable position, are considered worth crushing for the sake of the costs, though they will never yield a penny towards the debt.

Besides the persons who have the settlement of affairs in their hands, the original concocters of the company are the only persons who have profited from its operations. They indeed ride gloriously aloft above the ruin they have wrought. The process by which they have managed to extract a lordly independence for themselves, from a scheme which has resulted in the destitution and misery of every other participator, is a mystery we do not pretend to fathom in this case—though it is one of by no means unusual occurrence in connection with bubble-companies of all sorts.

WILD SPORTS OF THE EAST.

THE love of sport, as it is complaisantly termed, displayed by all ranks and classes among all the nations and tribes of the genus homo, is hardly less manifest among the dwellers in close and crowded cities, than among the nomadic lords of the forest and the plain. Whether it be that there is something in the sudden death-dealing vindication of man's authority over the beasts of the field, the fowls of the air, and the dumb denizens of the deep, that is gratifying to his vanity and egoism, or whether there be a pleasure independent of that in circumventing the wise instincts which nature has so variously implanted in the whole animal mind to ensure the due preservation of their several races, we are not going at this moment to inquire. It is enough for our present purpose that, irrespective of the demands of necessity, which we leave out of the question, wherever the human biped can find the two elements that go to constitute the savage recreation of sporting — to wit, the animal to be hunted or slain, and the means of hunting or slaying it — there he is sure to be found asserting his cruel prerogative, and rejoicing in the sport.

Nay more — if the game be not forthcoming, so strong is the instinct to hunt and slay, that he will purchase vermin for the sake of worrying it — or start from his winter fireside or his warm bed to go in search of the meanest quarry that runs or burrows, swims or flies.

The sportsmen of the metropolis may be divided into two very separate and distinct classes: the professionals and the amateurs—the former being the aristocracy, the latter the *profanum vulgus* of the species. With the first, comprising in its catalogues of great names, all, or nearly all, the "crack shots" of the day — slayers of thousands of pigeons and pluckers of thousands more—as we do not pretend to be initiated into the manifold mysteries of their hidden craft — have never been admitted to the secret conclave at the "Red House"— shot sparrows from the trap in Bill Grimes's meadow—or won a pig or lost a pound at a pigeon match in the whole course of our lives, we cannot pretend any intimate acquaintance,—and must, therefore, leave them alone in their glory — a glory by the way which few of them would be willing to exchange for a reputation, however well deserved, established upon any other basis.* We must confine our attention in this brief paper to that large section of the middle and lower orders with whom the pursuit of sport would seem to be a sort of governing instinct, impelling them to assume the angle in summer and the gun in winter, and to plod thousands of miles through the dust and swelter of one season, and the rain, snow, and drizzle of the other, in the pursuit of what they rarely by any chance come up with — game.

The angling season begins in London with the very first disappearance of frost and the first blush of blue sky in the heavens; and, with comparatively few exceptions, Sundays and holidays are the only days of sport. The young angler begins his career in the Surrey Canal, the Grand Junction Canal, or the New River, which ever happens to be nearest to the place of his abode. His first apparatus is a willow-wand, bought at the basketmaker's for a penny, and a roach-line for fivepence more. A sixpenny outfit satisfies his modest ambition; and thus equipped he sallies forth to feed — not the fishes — them he invariably frightens away — but himself, with the delusive hope of catching them. The

blue-bottles have not yet left their winter quarters, and "gentles" or maggots are not yet to be had; so he has recourse to kneaded bread or paste, hoping to beguile his prey with a vegetable diet. In order that the fishes may be duly apprised of the entertainment prepared for them, he crams his trousers-pockets with gravel, which he industriously scatters upon his float as it sails down the stream, doubtless impressed with the notion that the whole finny tribe within hearing will swarm beneath the stony shower to take their choice of the descending blessings, and finding his bait among them, give it the preference, and swallow it as a matter of course. The theory seems a very plausible one; but we cannot say that in practice, though witnessing it a thousand times, we ever saw it succeed. For the sake of something like an estimate of the amount of success among the juvenile anglers of this class, we lately watched the operations of a group of nearly thirty of them for two hours, but failed in deriving any data for a calculation, as not a fin appeared above water the whole time. With the exception of a few "stunnin' bites," and one "rippin' wallopper," which was proclaimed to have carried off a boy's hook, there was no indication of sport beyond that afforded by the party themselves.

When the sun, bountiful to sportsmen, begins, as Shakspeare has it, "to breed maggots in a dead dog," a new and superior race of anglers appears upon the margin of the waters. The dead dogs then have their day, and are now carefully collected from holes and corners by the makers and venders of fishing-tackle, and comfortably swaddled in bran, where they lie till their bones are white, originating "gentles" through the live-long summer for the use of the devotees of angling. Now we see something like tackle deserving the name: capitalists who think nothing of a crown, aye, or a pound either, by way of outfit; rods of real bamboo, straight as an arrow, and fifteen or twenty feet long; floats of porcupine quill, and lines of China twist; bait boxes, fish-cans, and belted baskets, and

all the paraphernalia of the contemplative recreation appear upon the banks; but still no fish, or nothing larger than what a half-pound trout would gobble up in his prowlings through some country stream for breakfast. All these mighty preparations are made against a generation among which a full-sized sprat would rank as a triton among the minnows. Not one Cockney sportsman in ten thousand has ever seen a trout alive, and would perhaps be as likely to be pulled into the water by one of a couple of pounds' weight as to pull the fish out, were he by any miracle doomed to the terrible alternative.

The oriental's enthusiasm for the sport has no sort of relation to his success. We met Charley Braggs in our last Sunday-evening's walk returning from his day's amusement. Now Charley is a machine-man in the —— Printing-office, and having put the Sunday paper to bed at about two o'clock, instead of going home to his own after a week of unremitting toil, he had set off for Hornsey by moonlight, where, perching himself upon a bank, he had sat from three in the morning till seven at night, bobbing for small fry at a bend in the New River. His basket was well stuffed — with grass; among which he pointed exultingly to four or five little silvery victims, whose united weight would have kicked the beam against a quarter of a pound. And yet Charley thought himself successful; and so he was in comparison with the average of New River anglers.

But we must ascend in the scale in order to do fair justice to our subject, and take a glance at the angling establishments in the neighbourhood of London, where good-sized fish are really caught, or, as the phrase is, "killed;" and where, in order that there may be no doubt about it, their skins are plentifully varnished and preserved as evidence of the fact. Upon the banks of the several rivers that empty themselves into the Thames at various points in the vicinity of London there are numerous establishments of this kind. We shall sketch one where we have before now passed a delicious day in the

enjoyment of the *dolce far niente*, and which will serve very well as a sample of the whole.

We mount upon an omnibus, and driving four or five miles through the suburbs in a north-easterly direction, are set down at a turnpike-gate in a neat, tree-sprinkled village. Leaving the village to the west, we take the turnpike-road, which leads in a direct line to the river, where, at the distance of half a mile from the village, it is crossed by a substantial and handsome bridge. Traversing the bridge, we turn to the right after a passage of a few score paces, and enter, through neatly-trimmed walks, upon the grounds and gardens of a country inn. Covered seats and rustic alcoves — arbours, and quiet, snug, leafy retreats, abound in the gardens and grounds which abut upon the river's brink. The water foams and dashes with the unceasing noise of a cataract over a series of wooden dams, erected to divert the main current into a new channel for the purposes of navigation — the old bed of the river being that rented by the proprietor of the inn, and by him strictly preserved for the delectation of his patrons, the amateur anglers of the metropolis. Let us enter the house, and proceeding upstairs to the piscatory sanctum, look around us while we impinge upon a bottle of the landlord's unexceptionable ale. Here we are in the very paradise of the London anglers, and surrounded with the trophies of their cunning and patience, ranged in glass-cases, and labelled with the weight of the immortalised victims and the names of their fortunate captors. Here it is recorded, for the instruction of future generations, that a gudgeon of seven inches three-eighths in length, and five ounces and a half in weight, was captured by the redoubtable Dubbs of Tooley Street, on the 6th of August, 1839; and though Dubbs himself, for aught we know, may long since have been gathered to his fathers, the wide-mouthed witness of the fact, the gudgeon himself, still hangs in the centre of his glass-case, suspended like Mohammed's coffin between heaven and earth, to bear perpetual testimony to his prowess. Yonder

is a perch of three pounds, caught by Stubbs of Little Britain; and above it a mavellously chubby chub, caught by Bubb of the street called Grub. These memorials of past achievements no doubt have their due influence, and urge the rising heroes of the angle to emulate their great forerunners. One whole side of the dining-room, you see, is parcelled out in lockers large enough to contain the necessary tackle and apparatus; and each locker is neatly painted, and bears the name of the amateur to whom the contents belong. These—and their number is not small—are the regular subscribing members of the angling fraternity; and here on every Sunday throughout the summer, unless the weather be very bad indeed, they muster strong, often arriving while the dew is yet on the grass, and pursue their silent pleasures till dinner, steaming on the table at two o'clock, calls them together to report progress and recruit their strength.

The conversation on these occasions is characteristic and technical, and altogether fishy.

"Ha, Bubbs!" says Stubbs; "shake a fin, old trout. What's the cheese? You don't look very fresh about the gills to-day."

"Why," responds Bubbs, "you see I started afore light, and had but a scaly breakfast — not quite the thing in the ground-bait, you see. I'll be all right as a roach after I've nibbled a bit, I daresay."

Happy the man who at the dinner-table can display to the view of his admiring comrades some fish of mark — some roach of ten, or chub of twenty ounces. Old exploits are gone over for the hundredth time, with added particulars at every repetition. Baits are overhauled and discussed along with the brandy and water. Moss-crammed bags, where blood-worms, dung-worms, lobs, and lance-tails are kept to scour, are ransacked for specimens, and notes and maggots are compared, and much finny and vermic lore is elicited from the veterans of the silent art. The dinner and grog being duly honoured,

the rod is again resumed beneath the shadowy shelter of the trees on the river's brink; and long after the gloom of night has descended upon the gurgling stream, the brethren of the angle in populous silence pursue their labours. It is now seven years since friend Bubb caught his big chub: the monster fish rose at his fly full sixty feet off, on the opposite side of the stream, where there is an eddy of the current rebounding from yon projecting piles. It was the work of an hour — *the* hour of Bubb's life — to bring the "wallopping gentleman" safe to land; and ever since, throughout every Sunday and holiday of the fishing season, has Bubbs been lashing away at the water with his whipping-rod and fifty yards of line, in the fond expectation of catching another to match him. "Good-luck to your fishing!" say we. We cannot wait for the next bite, but must be off to see what the punters are about in the Thames.

"Patience in a Punt" is the title of an old caricature, representing the "elderly gentleman" of hat-and-wig notoriety seated on a dilapidated chair in a flat-bottomed boat during the pelting of a pitiless storm, from which he is but partially sheltered by the skeleton of an umbrella, and, with eyes intent on his float, waiting for a bite. The picture is as applicable at the present hour to the class for whom it was intended, as it was when published forty years ago. The punt is a nondescript kind of boat, with perpendicular sides and square ends. The fishing-houses on the banks of the Thames — of which there are plenty on both sides of the river, from Putney to Kingston, and beyond — are abundantly provided with these boats, in which the angler sits upon a chair, and generally baits for barbel, the only fish in the waters near London, with the exception of the pike, which, from the unwillingness he manifests to leave his native element, can be said to yield anything like sport in the catching. In some parts of the river near Twickenham they are exceedingly plentiful at times, and thirty or forty pounds' weight of them are not unfrequently

caught in a day by a single rod. There is one thing against them, however, and that is, that they are worse than good for nothing. They hardly deserve the name of fish, being a species of mud vermin armed with snouts, and they taste of earth to a degree perfectly nauseous. People every season die through eating them, yet they are eagerly sought after, and an immense amount of time and expense is annually thrown away in their capture. The virtue of patience in connection with punt-fishing is exemplified in waiting day after day half the season through before you make acquaintance with a single barbel. These unsavoury creatures herd together in swarms, and migrate from place to place, seeking a new feeding-ground when the old one is exhausted, and seldom staying long in one spot. As it is never possible to tell where these herds of river swine are lying with their snouts in the mud, you may plant your punt fifty times before you light upon a swarm, and thus cultivate your patience to the highest pitch of perfection.

In conjunction with the barbel-fishing in the Thames, we may notice the bream-fishing in the different docks. It seems an odd thing that there should be any connection between the corn-laws and fishing for bream; yet a connection there certainly is. Some of the docks appropriated for the reception and unlading of vessels freighted with grain became gradually well-stocked with this particular fish, which thrives well upon a bread diet. Corn that from long hoarding under a high duty had become weaviled and worthless, was frequently thrown overboard, and that in vast quantities; and the consequence was, that enormous specimens of full-fed, aldermanic-looking bream were occasionally lugged forth to the light by the amateur anglers of the docks. We have seen them hauled up to the surface from a depth of twenty feet, looming through the green water like the broad, white waistcoat of an alderman through the reek of a civic feast. Apparently too fat to wag their tails, they dangled supine upon the treacherous hook, and only winking a bleared eye under the unwelcome light of

day, "gave up their quiet being" without an attempt at a struggle.

In walking about the streets of London one is struck with the singularly great proportion of fishing-tackle shops, taken in connection with the actual requirements of the population. There are some districts literally crammed with them—quiet, retired spots generally, where the traffic in other things is small, and the passers-by comparatively few. The key to this apparent riddle will be found in the fact, that the London makers supply the greater part of the kingdom—that nearly the whole of the fresh-water fishing-tackle of England is the produce of London manufactories. The harvest of these tradesmen is of course the summer season, and they spare no pains to make it as profitable as may be. At any of these shops you may purchase liberty to fish in private ponds or streams, situated, some of them, in distant counties, and contract for board and lodging at a moderate rate, or at any rate you choose, during your stay.

But we must proceed summarily to notice the winter field-sports of the indigenous Cockney with dog and gun, or with gun and no dog, as it may happen. Of this class of sportsmen there is no variety: the species is one and the same, and you might almost fancy it is the same individual you meet with everywhere, turn your face in what direction you will out of town on a Sunday in winter. He is a sort of hybrid specimen, half-artizan, half-mendicant, with a dash of the area sneak. Unwashed, untrimmed, and you may be sure unlicensed, he saunters forth with his hands in his pockets; his gun, a long iron-barrelled, rusty old flint, balanced under his arm; while his unctuous rags flutter in the wind. He is followed at a little distance by a half-starved, unwilling whelp, which is too well acquainted with the vigour of his master's toe to venture his lean and lank anatomy within kicking distance, and which cannot always be seduced by the combined allurements of

oaths, whistlings, and peltings, to participate in the day's sport. He carries his powder and shot in his pocket, and measures the charge with the bowl of a tobacco-pipe; and his game is anything that flies or runs, from a crow to a water-rat. His impatience for sport seldom allows him to straggle farther than the brick-fields, which on all sides of London constitute the line of demarcation between the country and the town. Here he loads his piece and his short pipe, and with the latter firmly gripped by his teeth, prowls among the half-baked bricks, waging war among the sparrows and wagtails unfortunate enough to come in his way. He is the terror of the cottagers and gardeners of the suburbs, and the admiration of a cluster of ragged urchins, who gather round him and do his despotic bidding with alacrity. He never aims at a bird on the wing; and never, if he can help it, pulls the trigger without first securing a convenient resting-place for his long barrel. With all these precautions he considers himself fortunate if he kills once out of three times; and all the dead sparrows he carries home cost him at least ten times their weight in lead. We have met him more than once in the custody of the policeman, marching off to the station for sending shot through cottage windows, or leaping garden-fences after maimed sparrows. It is fortunate for the public that his recreation is generally over early in the day. By one o'clock the public-house is open, and even though his ammunition be not by that time all shot away, as is generally the case, he cannot resist the vision of the pewter-pot, which rises before his imagination as the destined hour draws near. Sometimes a wild ambition seizes him; he will learn to shoot flying, and then you may perchance come upon him in some retired field under Highgate Hill, in company with some congenial spirit, furnished with a luckless pigeon tied by the leg, at which these considerate sportsmen fire by turns, as the miserable bird rises in the air to the length of the string. The last time we witnessed this

delectable *sport*, the string was severed by the twentieth discharge, and the unwounded bird got clear off, to the mortal chagrin of the pair of brutes.

The purlieus of Whitechapel and some other districts of London are yet disgraced by the disgustingly-cruel and senseless exhibitions of dog-fights, badger-baitings, and rat-slaughters; in which latter spectacle of barbarity certain wretches in human shape, envious of the reputation of the celebrated dog Billy, have aspired to emulate his exploits, and are actually seen to enter the arena with a hundred or more live rats, which they are backed, or back themselves, to kill with their teeth alone in a given time! The cock-pit, too, yet survives, and mains are fought in secret and out of ear-shot of the Society for the Suppression of Cruelty to Animals. These and similar brutalities, however, — thanks to the dawn of a better feeling and a more enlightened self-respect among the lower orders — are very much on the wane, and it may be fairly hoped will hardly survive the present generation of Cockney sportsmen.

UNFASHIONABLE CLUBS.

It is with a feeling doubtless somewhat analogous to that of the angler, that the London shopkeeper from time to time regards the moneyless crowds who throng in gaping admiration around the tempting display he makes in his window. His admirers and the fish, however, are in different circumstances: the one won't bite if they have no mind; the others can't bite if they should have all the mind in the world. Yet the shopkeeper manages better than the angler; for while the fish are deaf to the charming of the latter, charm he never so wisely, the former is able, at a certain season of the year, to convert the moneyless gazers into ready-money customers. This he does by the force of logic. "You are thinking of Christmas," says he—"yes, you are; and you long to have a plum-pudding for that day—don't deny it. Well, but you can't have it, think as much as you will; it is impossible as you manage at present. But I'll tell you how to get the better of the impossibility. In twenty weeks we shall have Christmas here: now if, instead of spending every week all you earn, you will hand me over sixpence or a shilling out of your wages, I'll take care of it for you, since you can't take care of it for yourself; and you shall have the full value out of my shop any time in Christmas-week, and be as merry as you like, and none the poorer."

This logic is irresistible. Tomkins banks his sixpence for a

plum-pudding and the etceteras with Mr. Allspice the grocer; and this identical pudding he enjoys the pleasure of eating half-a-dozen times over in imagination before the next instalment is due. He at length becomes so fond of the flavour, that he actually—we know, for we have seen him do it—he actually, to use his own expression, "goes in for a goose" besides with Mr. Pluck the poulterer. Having once passed the Rubicon, of course he cannot go back; the weekly sixpences must be paid come what will; it would be disgraceful to be a defaulter. So he practises a little self-denial, for the sake of a little self-esteem—and the goose and pudding in perspective. He finds, to his astonishment, that he can do quite as much work with one pot of beer a day as he could with two, and he drops the superfluous pot, and not only pays his instalments to the Christmas-bank, but gets a spare shilling in his pocket besides. Thus under the tuition of the shopkeeper, he learns the practice of prudence in provisioning his family with plum-pudding, and imbibes the first and foremost of the household virtues, on the same principle as a wayward child imbibes physic—out of regard to the dainty morsel that is to come afterwards.

Passing one day last autumn through a long and populous thoroughfare on the southern side of the Thames, we happened to light upon Mr. Allspice's appeal to the consciences and the pockets of the pudding-eating public. "If you are wise," said the admonitory placard, "you will lose no time in joining Allspice's Plum-pudding Club." Remembering the retort of a celebrated quack, "Give me all the fools that come this way for my customers, and you are welcome to the wise men," we must own we felt rather doubtful of the prosperity of the puddings; but having an interest in the matter, we resolved, notwithstanding, to ascertain, if possible, whether the Wisdom who uttereth her voice in the streets had on this special occasion spoken to any purpose, and whether any, and how many, had proved themselves wise in the acceptation of Mr.

Allspice. On making the necessary inquiries after the affair had gone off, we learned, to our surprise and gratification, that the club had been entirely successful. Upwards of a hundred persons of a class who are never worth half-a-crown at a time, had subscribed sixpence a week each for eighteen weeks, and thus entitled themselves to nine shillings' worth of plum-pudding ingredients, besides a certain quantity of tea and sugar. Thus the club had prospered exceedingly, and had been the instrument of introducing comfort and festive enjoyment to no small number of persons who might, and in all probability would, have had little to eat or drink, and, consequently, little cause for merriment, at that season. This is really a very pleasant fact to contemplate, connected though it be with a somewhat ludicrous kind of ingenuity, which must be exercised in order to bring it about. To anybody but a London shopkeeper, the attempt would appear altogether hopeless, to transform a hundred poor persons, who were never worth half-a-crown a piece from one year's end to the other, into so many nine shilling customers; and yet the thing is done, and done, too, by the London grocer in a manner highly satisfactory, and still more advantageous to his customers. Is it too much to imagine that the lesson of provident forethought thus agreeably learned by multitudes of the struggling classes—for these clubs abound everywhere in London, and their members must be legion—have a moral effect upon at least a considerable portion of them? If one man finds a hundred needy customers wise enough to relish a plum-pudding of their own providing, surely they will not *all* be such fools as to repudiate the practice of that very prudence which procured them the enjoyment, and brought mirth and gladness to their firesides. Never think it! They shall go on to improve, take our word for it; and having learned prudence from plum-pudding, and generosity from goose—for your poor man is always the first to give a slice or two of the breast, when he has it, to a sick neighbour—they shall learn

temperance from tea, and abstinence if they choose, from coffee, and ever so many other good qualities from ever so many other good things; and from having been wise enough to join the grocer's Plum-pudding Club, they shall end by becoming prosperous enough to join the Whittington Club, or the Gresham Club, or the Athenæum Club, or the Travellers' Club; or the House of Commons, or the House of Lords either, for all that you, or we, or anybody else, can say or do to the contrary.

We know nothing of the original genius who first hit upon this mode of indoctrinating the lower orders in a way so much to their advantage; we hope, however, as there is little reason to doubt, that he found his own account in it, and reaped his well-deserved reward. Whoever he was, his example has been well followed for many years past. In the poorer and more populous districts of the metropolis, this practice of making provision for inevitable wants, by small subscriptions paid in advance, prevails to a large extent. As winter sets in, almost every provision-dealer, and other traders as well, proffers a compact to the public, which he calls a club, though it is more of the nature of a savings-bank, seeing that, at the expiration of the subscribing period, every member is a creditor of the shop to the amount of his own investments, and nothing more. Thus, besides the Plum-pudding Clubs, there are Coal Clubs, by which the poor man who invests 1s. a week for five or six of the summer months, gets a ton of good coal laid in for the winter's consumption before the frost sets in and the coal becomes dear. Then there is the Goose Club, which the wiser members manage among themselves by contracting with a country dealer, and thus avoid the tipsy consummation of the public-house, where these clubs have mostly taken shelter. Again, there is the Twelfth-cake Club, which comes to a head soon after Christmas, and is more of a lottery than a club, inasmuch as the large cakes are raffled for, and the losers, if they get anything, get but a big bun for their pains and

penalties. All these clubs, it will be observed, are plants of winter-growth, or at least of winter-fruiting, having for their object the provision of something desirable or indispensable in the winter season. There is, however, another and a very different species of club, infinitely more popular than any of the above, the operations of which are aboundingly visible throughout the warm and pleasant months of summer, and which may be, and sometimes is, called the Excursion Club.

The Excursion Club is a provision which the working and labouring classes of London have got up for themselves, to enable them to enjoy, at a charge available to their scanty means, the exciting pleasures—which are as necessary as food or raiment to their health and comfort—of a change of air and scene. It is managed in a simple way. The foreman of a workshop, or the father of a family in some confined court, or perhaps some manageress of a troop of working-girls, contracts with the owner of a van for the hire of his vehicle and the services of a driver for a certain day. More frequently still, the owner of the van is the prime mover in the business, but then the trip is not so cheap. The members club their funds, the men paying 1s. each, the wives, 6d., the children, 3d. or 4d.; and any poor little ragged orphan urchin, who may be hanging about the workshop, gets accommodated with a borrowed jacket and trousers, and a gratuitous face-washing from Mrs. Grundy, and is taken for nothing, and well fed into the bargain. The cost, something over a guinea, is easily made up, and if any surplus remains, why, then, they hire a fiddler to go along with them. On the appointed morning, at an early hour, rain or shine, they flock to the rendezvous to the number of forty or fifty—ten or a dozen more or less is a trifle not worth mentioning. Each one carries his own provisions, and loaded with baskets, cans, bottles, and earthen-jars, mugs and tea-kettles, in they bundle, and off they jog—pans rattling, women chattering, kettles clinking, children crowing, fiddle scraping, and men smoking—at the rate of

six or seven miles an hour, to Hampton Court or Epping Forest. It is impossible for a person who has never witnessed these excursions in the height of summer, to form an adequate notion of the merry and exciting nature of the relaxation they afford to a truly prodigious number of the hard-working classes. Returning from Kingston to London one fine Monday morning in June last, we met a train of these laughter-loaded vans, measuring a full mile in length, and which must have consisted of threescore or more vehicles, most of them provided with music of some sort, and adorned with flowers and green boughs. As they shot one at a time past the omnibus on which we sat, we were saluted by successive volleys of mingled mirth and music, and by such constellations of merry-faced mortals in St. Monday garb, as would have made a sunshine under the blackest sky that ever gloomed. Arrived at Hampton Court, the separate parties encamp under the trees in Bushy Park, where they amuse themselves the live-long day in innocent sports, for which your Londoner has at bottom a most unequivocal and hearty relish. They will most likely spend a few hours in wandering through the picture-galleries in the palace, then take a stroll in the exquisite gardens, where the young fellow who is thoughtless enough to pluck a flower for his sweetheart, is instantly and infallibly condemned to drag a heavy iron roller up and down the gravel-walk, to the amusement of a thousand or two of grinning spectators. Having seen the palace and the gardens, they pay a short visit, perhaps, to the monster grape-vine, with its myriads of clusters of grapes, all of which her gracious Majesty is supposed to devour; and then they return to their dinner beneath some giant chestnut-tree in the park. The cloth is spread at the foot of the huge trunk; the gashed joints of the Sunday's baked meats, flanked by a very mountainous gooseberry pie, with crusty loaves and sections of cheese and pats of butter, cut a capital figure among the heterogeneous contribution of pitchers, preserve-jars, tin-cans,

mugs and jugs, shankless rummers and wine-glasses, and knives and forks of every size and pattern, from the balance handles and straight blades of to-day, to the wooden haft and curly-nosed cimetar of a century back. Their sharpened appetites make short work of the cold meats and pies. Treble X of somebody's own corking fizzes forth from brown jar and black bottle, and if more is wanted, it is fetched from the neighbouring tavern. Dinner done, the fiddle strikes up, and a dance on the greensward by the young people, while the old ones, stretched under the trees, enjoy a quiet gossip and a refreshing pipe, fills up the afternoon. There is always somebody at this crisis who is neither too old to dance nor too young to smoke a gossipping pipe, and so he does both at intervals—rushing now into the dance, drawn by the irresistible attraction of the fiddle, and now sidling back again to his smoke-puffing chums, impelled by the equally resistless charms of tobacco. Then and therefore he is branded as a deserter, and a file of young lasses lay hands on him, and drag him forth in custody to the dance; and after a good scolding from laughing lips, and a good drubbing from white handkerchiefs, they compromise the business at last by allowing him to dance with his pipe in his mouth.

By five o'clock, Mrs. Grundy has managed, with the connivance of Jack the driver, somehow or other to boil the kettle, and a cup of tea is ready for all who are inclined to partake. The young folks for the most part prefer the dance: they can have tea any day—they will not dance on the grass again till next year perhaps; so they make the most of their time. By and by, the fiddler's elbow refuses to wag any longer: he is perfectly willing himself, as he says, "to play till all's blue; but you see," he adds, "bones wont do it." "Never mind," says the Beau Nash of the day: "sack your badger, old boy, and go and get some resin. Now, then, for kiss in the ring!" Then while the fiddler gets his resin, which means anything he likes to eat or drink, the whole

party, perhaps amounting to three or four van loads in all, form into a circle for "kiss in the ring!" The ring is one uproarious round of frolic and laughter, which would "hold both its sides," but that it is forced to hold its neighbours' hands with both its own, under which the flying damsel who has to be caught and kissed bobs in and out, doubling like a hare, till she is out of breath, and is overtaken at last, and led bashfully into the centre of the group, to suffer the awful penalty of the law. While this popular pastime is prolonged to the last moment, the van is getting ready to return; the old folks assist in stowing away the empty baskets and vessels; and an hour or so before sun-down, or it may be half an hour after, the whole party are remounted, and on their way home again, where they arrive, after a jovial ride, weary with enjoyment, and with matter to talk about for a month to come.

At Epping Forest, the scene is very different, but not a whit the less lively. There are no picture-galleries, or pleasure-gardens, but there is the forest to roam in, full of noble trees, in endless sinuous avenues, crowned with the "scarce intruding sky," among which the joyous holiday-makers form a finer picture than was ever painted yet. Then there are friendly foot-races and jumping-matches, and leap-frogging, and blackberrying, and foot-balling, and hockey-and-trapping, and many other games besides, in addition to the dancing and the ring-kissing. Epping and Hainault Forests are essentially the lungs of Whitechapel and Spitalfields. Their leafy shades are invaded all the summer long by the van-borne hosts of laborious poverty. Clubs, whose members invest but a penny a week, start into existence as soon as the leaves begin to sprout in the spring; with the first gush of summer, the living tide begins to flow into the cool bosom of the forest; and until late in the autumn, unless the weather is prematurely wintry, there is no pause for a day or an hour of sunshine in the rush of health-seekers to the green shades. The

fiat has gone forth from the government for the destruction of these forests, for the felling of the trees and the inclosure of the land. Will the public permit the execution of the barbarous decree? We trust not.

Notwithstanding all that has been said, and so justly said, of the notorious improvidence of the poor, it will be seen from the above hasty sketches, that they yet can and do help themselves to many things which are undeniably profitable and advantageous to them: they only want, in fact, a motive for so doing—a foregone conviction that the thing desiderated is worth having. Now, here is ground for hope—an opening, so to speak, for the point of the wedge. That the very poor may be taught to practise self-denial, in the prospect of a future benefit, these clubs have proved; and we may confess to a prejudice in their favour, not merely from what they have accomplished, but from a not unreasonable hope, that they may perchance foster a habit which will lead to far better things than even warm chimney-corners, greenwood holidays, roast geese, and plum-pudding.

CHRISTMAS (1851) IN THE METROPOLIS.

THE first indication of the approach of Christmas—a literal "note of preparation," generally steals over us in this crowded city in a dream of the night. Somewhere about the beginning of December, in the small hour "ayont the twal'," a sense of something Elysian qualifies one's quiet slumber; then a faint and distant sound of sweet harmony glides agreeably upon the ear, and grows louder and louder, and we dream rapturous dreams, and float among a countless host of singing seraphs bright—on, and on, and on, when, suddenly, with a start, one wakes to find the dream not all a dream. For there, beneath your window, is a band of French-horns, flutes, oboes, and trombones, warbling the pastoral symphony of Handel with low-toned instruments, whose quiet voices thrill you with pleasure. Pausing in your breath, you drink in every note, and listen greedily till the strain has ceased; then a stentorian voice rings through the fog and mist and moisture, invoking in behalf of all and sundry within hearing, "a merry Christmas and a happy new-year." Then you drop off once more to sleep, in the dreamy intervals of which the strain is renewed again and again; and you rise in the morning with the full-blown consciousness that Christmas is at hand, and that all the world, and the London world in particular, is bound to be as merry and as happy as it can be.

So the "waits" having thus warned you of the advent of

the great annual fact, you begin to look about in your walks abroad for the verification of it; and though it yet wants three weeks or more of Christmas-day, there is no lack of indications of what is expected. In anticipation of the liberal expenditure of ready cash—the most interesting consideration of the season to a London trader—and which expenditure every shopkeeper is dutifully anxious to engross as far as possible to himself, a thousand different persuasive devices are already placarded and profusely exhibited. "Christmas presents" forms a monster line in the posters on the walls and in the shop-windows. Infantine appeals in gigantic type cover the hoardings. "Do, Papa, Buy Me" so-and-so; so-and-so being blotted out in a few hours by "The New Patent Wig," so that the appeal remains a perplexing puzzle to affectionate parents, till both are in turn blotted out by a third poster, announcing the sacrifice of 120,000 gipsy cloaks and winter mantles at less than half the cost-price. Cheap Christmas books are a part of every bookseller's display; Christmas fashions fill the drapers' windows, and stand on full-dressed poles in the doorways. There are Christmas lamps, lustres, and candelabra; Christmas diamonds made of paste, and Brumagem jewellery for glittering show, as well as Christmas furniture for parties and routs, to be hired for the season—carving, gilding, hangings, beds; everything which, being wanted but once a year, it may be cheaper to hire than to purchase or to keep on hand.

The slopsellers especially are in a state of prodigious activity, taking time by the forelock, and pushing their unwieldly advertising vans out in every direction, freighted with puffs of their appropriate Christmas garb — Hebrew harness for a Christian festival. These are a few of the broad palms thus early stretched forth to catch a share of the golden shower about to fall.

But these and such as these are very minor and subordinate preparations. Eating and drinking, after all, are the chief and paramount obligations of the Christmas season. As the

month grows older, the great gastronomic anniversary is heralded at every turn by signs more abundant and less equivocal. Among the dealers in eatables, one and all of whom are now putting in their sickles for the harvest, the grocer, who is independent of the weather, leads off the dance. Long before the holly and the mistletoe have come to town, he has received his stock of Christmas fruit, on the sale of which, it may be, the profit or loss of the whole year's trading is depending. For months past, he has been occupied at every leisure hour in breaking to pieces the rocky mass of conglomerate gravel, dirt, sticks, and fruit which, under the designation of currants, came to him from the docks; and it is not before he has got rid of near half the gross weight, that the indispensable currants are fit to meet the eye of the public. This is one of the nuisances of his trade, and forms a ceremony which, as every housekeeper knows well enough, is but indifferently performed after all. The currants, tolerably cleaned and professionally moistened, occupy a conspicuous place in his window, along with the various sorts of raisins—Sultanas, Muscatels, and Valencias—dates, prunes, and preserves in pots, and candied lemons and spices, built up in the most attractive and gaudy piles and pyramids, edged round with boxes of foreign confections, adorned with admirable specimens of the lithographic art, and all ticketed in clean new figures at astonishingly low prices. The gin-shops, or, to speak more politely, the wine-vaults, now begin to brush up. They wash and varnish over their soiled paint, cleanse the outsides and decorate the insides of their faded saloons; and concocting new combinations of fire-water, prepare for thirsty poverty new incentives to oblivious intemperance. Every third-rate inn and back-street public-house is the centre and focus of a goose-club, the announcement of which stares you in the face twenty times in the course of a day's walk. They owe their existence to the improvidence and want of economy of the labouring and lowest classes. A small weekly sum

subscribed for thirteen weeks, entitles each subscriber to a goose; and by increasing his weekly dole, he may insure, besides the goose, a couple of bottles of spirits. The distribution of geese and gin takes place on Christmas-eve; and in large working establishments, where the goose-club is a favourite institution, and where, for the most part, the innkeeper is not allowed to meddle, the choice of the birds is decided by the throw of the dice, the thrower of the highest cast having the first choice. We will drop in at the hour of distribution, and witness the consummation of one of these affairs.

But time rolls on, and the great cattle-show in Baker-street has come off. The pig of half a ton weight has held his last levee, and grunted a welcome to the lords and ladies of the aristocracy, and to hundreds of thousands of less distinguished visitors. The prize animals are all sold, and marched or carted off to their new owners. The periodical insanity of the butchers has been developed as strongly as ever. The love of fame glows beneath a blue apron as fiercely as beneath a diamond star; and determined to cut a respectable figure in the carnival which is approaching, Mr. Stickem does not hesitate to purchase a beast, which he knows well enough will hardly cut up for five-and-thirty pounds, at the cost of seventy. What of that? The bubble reputation outweighs the love of lucre, and if he is satisfied with his bargain, who shall complain? Happy is the butcher who has been enabled to purchase a prize-ox; he is not disposed to hide his candle under a bushel. If he have room in front of his shop, he will tether his dear bargain, during the short hours of daylight, to a post in front of his doorway—where, a good fat ox being a special favourite with the public, he is patted and petted by them as they stop in groups to admire his vast proportions. The unwieldly beast, ornamented with ribbons and favours, gazes moodily around him, now plucks a mouthful of hay, and now utters a sonorous bellow—a lament for the pastures of his calfhood.

Let us now transport ourselves to Covent-garden on the eve of Christmas-week. It is late on Friday night, and to-morrow is the last Saturday's market before Christmas-day. The market, which for the last two months has been redolent of the damp odour of the sere and yellow leaf, is now to blossom for a few short hours with renewed brilliancy. The bells of the city have not yet struck the hours of midnight, when from the various avenues which lead into Covent-garden, the sound of wheels is heard on all sides, and a continuous stream of carts and waggons pours into the open space, which, in less than an hour, is rendered impassable to any but adventurous foot passengers. At the first glance, the whole burden of the numberless wains appears one mass of evergreens; it looks as though Birnam Wood had actually come to Dunsinane. Immense quantities of holly and fir, with here and there a bough of laurel, show the demand of the Londoners for winter verdure. The mistletoe-bough, which has hung like an inverted gooseberry bush from the old apple-tree all the summer long, and a fine specimen of which is good at this nick of time for half-a-guinea, to say nothing of the kissing, which we don't presume to value, appears this year in quantities truly enormous, and, we should think, unprecedented. The market now presents a noisy and interesting spectacle. The bawling and roaring of drivers, the backing of wains to make room for privileged new-comers, the chaffering of dealers, who are not at all angry, passionate as they seem, the grappling feet of horses, and fifty minor sounds, perplex the ear, as much as the dim vision does the eye, of dark figures flitting rapidly about hither and thither, by the light of a hundred lanterns constantly dodging up and down, and the steady glare of the gas overhead. In the midst of all this apparent confusion, however, business is doing and done by wholesale. By three or four o'clock, a good half of the various wares, prickly as well as palatable, brought to market, are transferred to new proprietors, and are already off, most of them without breaking bulk,

to different quarters of the town. Long before the dawn, the din has ceased altogether, and the cause of it has vanished. The traders of the market are mostly on the spot before four o'clock, and are now active in preparing the show of winter fruit, which is to adorn the tables of the wealthy in the coming festival. Before ten o'clock, the arcade is in trim for visitors and customers, and a tempting array of all that the depth of winter can produce is ranged in artistic order. There are apples of all hues and sizes, among which the brown russet, the golden bob, and the Ribston pippins, are pre-eminent. Among the pears are the huge winter-pear, the delicious Charmontel, and the bishop's-thumb. Then there are foreign and hot-house grapes, transparent and luscious; large English pine-apples, pomegranates, brown biffins from Norfolk, and baskets of soft medlars; Kent cob-nuts, filberts and foreign nuts of outlandish shapes, all gaily mingled and mixed up with flowers of all hues, natural and artificial, and both, and neither; bouquets of real grasses tinted to an unreal colour, *immortelles* that were never green, stained into evergreen; weeds and wayside flowers dried to death, and then dyed of various hues to live and blossom again, scented with delicious odours which nature never gave them; flowers cut from coloured paper, flowers modelled in wax, flowers of tinted cotton fabrics, flowers carved delicately from turnips and beet-root—all in bright and brilliant contrast with the dark-green holly and the sere and russet hue of the winter fruit. Notwithstanding this artificial attempt at colour, the show is, on the whole, much more suggestive to the palate than captivating to the eye. You cannot help noticing a prodigious number of sapling firs, some transplanted into pots, and trained, cropped, and clipped into regular shapes for Christmas-trees; most of these are sold naked as brought to market, but some few are loaded with fruit, oranges, lemons, and clustered grapes, and liberally adorned with imitative flowers and wreaths. The confectioners purchase these trees, and load the branches with

choice delicacies under various disguises, and will present each member of a customer's family with an appropriate token of affectionate remembrance. This practice of plucking fruit from the Christmas tree, which is growing more and more prevalent in English families, is of German origin, and is said to owe its increasing popularity in England to the custom of the royal family, whose Christmas-tree is pretty sure to be fully described in the fashionable journals.

But we must leave the market to the customers, who are now thronging in, and pursue our way eastward. The weather is precisely in that condition which any alteration would improve—close, warm, and wet, with a drizzling rain, and without the remotest sign of what every butcher, fishmonger, and poulterer is praying for—a frost. But every phase of the weather has its peculiar phenomena in this critical season; one is visible in the spare and comparatively Lenten aspect, as yet, of the butchers' shops. They are afraid to expose to show their prize meat; and the fat cattle, though probably all by this time slain, are left hanging in the slaughter-house. So the butchers make an extra show with evergreens and sawdust, and a few—only a few—prize sheep, whose broad backs bear their history inscribed in inch-long characters, declaring where and by whom they were bred and fed. In a few hours they will be cut up, and then you may learn, if you like, from similar labels, by whom each joint will be eaten. That smart-looking countryman yonder, standing on the kerbstone, he with the green wide-awake, cutty smock-frock, corduroy breeches, and short, heavy high-lows, is another of the phenomena whose appearance here is due to warm weather in winter. Crowding and fluttering round his feet are a group of fifty hungry ducks, whom he, their cautious owner, has not dared to kill, lest in so doing he should kill his profits; so, three days ago, he brought his gobbling friends alive to market, and has already reduced their number to one-half. The famished birds are pecking desperately

at a few grains of barley, which he occasionally dispenses from his pocket in homœopathic doses, merely to keep them from straying away. He is intent on doing business; hear him: (Duck-dealer *loquitur*) "Sure to be fresh, marm—all alive, you see; kill 'em when you want 'em—pick and choose a couple for three-and-six, say three bob, marm. Kill 'em for you? Certainly, marm. Which is your fancy, marm? Ha! I see you knows what a duck is. Here, dilly! dilly! come and be killed, you fool. There, marm, that's the way we doos it, quite skyantific, you see. Stop, marm, let me put 'em in the basket; they'll lie under the apples snug as nine-pence—that's it. Thanky, marm. Yar—ar! Sold agin, and got the money. Who's for the next sample? Who says ducks?—ducks an' apple-sarse! that's a tidy tightener, I reckon," &c.

Turning into a side street, for the sake of avoiding the greasy mud, trodden and churned by myriads of feet to the consistence of bird-lime, we come upon another phenomenon, consequent, in some degree, upon the warm and close weather. We are suddenly confronted by an enormous serried phalanx, full fifty yards in solid depth, of wayworn, spit-doomed geese, waddling wearily forwards, their hungry bills gaping aloft in the air, and every feather sodden with moisture, and dyed to the hue of London mud. Unlike their renowned ancestors, the guardian fowls of Rome, they have not a syllable to say for themselves. Fifteen mortal miles have the whole troop of nearly 1000 waddled painfully since, by the cold starlight, they were roused from their roost, and compelled to sally forth under the conduct of the driver, who, armed with a wand ten feet long, which answers his purpose better than any dog, with whom the geese would inevitably do battle, has undertaken the patient and difficult task of consigning them to their final friend and patron, the poulterer. He has to enter London, and pick the whole way to his destination through side streets and by-ways, in order to escape collision with cabs and

omnibuses, which would make short work with his intractable flock. The whole regiment are completely exhausted by the long march; each one presents a sorry spectacle of individual distress: with empty crops and parched throats, heads erect and gasping for air, they look wildly round, and press feebly yet hurriedly on, without emitting the slightest sound. If a single "quack" would save the Capitol, it would not be uttered. These unfortunate candidates for a fellowship with sage and onions, to obtain which they must be plucked as a preparatory step, are bred and trained, with a view to this especial promotion, in Epping and Hainault Forests, whence whole armies are despatched, in dead and living detachments, at Michaelmas and Christmas. A good portion of them die a patriot's death on their native soil, and escape the misery of such a journey as these have undergone; but vast numbers are every year, especially when the weather is unfavourable for killing, condemned to execute a forced march upon the capital, where they operate as a *corps de reserve*, awaiting the exigencies of the poulterer, whose knife, like the sword of Damocles, hangs suspended over their heads, with this difference, however, that it is sure to fall and to slay. It is no unusual thing to meet the drover of this feathery herd strung round the waist with half-a-dozen disabled travellers, who, from accident or weariness, have broken down on the way.

On account of the weather, and the four clear days which have yet to elapse before Christmas, Saturday's market is, comparatively speaking, but a flat affair, and presents nothing particularly worthy of record. Sunday comes on with a drab-coloured sky, fringed with fog, and dripping with occasional warm showers. The fishers and fleshers fret at their devotions, and pray for seasonable weather. The sky is clear at eventide, and the stars shine out. Vain promise! Monday is ten times worse—not a breath of air stirs—the whole vast city is seething in one warm vapour-bath—the thermometer stands almost at "temperate," and ten minutes' walk wets

you through in spite of your umbrella. Still, now or never is the time for display, and forth comes everything into fair daylight, such as it is. The mistletoe-boughs, which everywhere droop pendent where comestibles are to be sold, are dripping with moisture, and every milk-white berry seems to distil a crystal drop. Greengrocers, fishmongers, and fruiterers are embowered in greenery; but they are busy as bees in their damp hives, unpacking, packing, and arranging and despatching goods to weather-bound customers. The greengrocer galls the kibe of the grocer, and sells all the materials for plum-pudding, as well as vegetables for the pot and fruit for the dessert. The fishmonger, who is completely built in with barrels of oysters, trenches upon the domain of the poulterer; and to fish of all flavours, fresh and salt, from the smelt to the cod, adds geese and turkeys, and barn-door fowls. The butcher now marshals his meat—the mutton in carcasses, the beef in quarters, such quarters!—in the most imposing order. But the relentless clouds pour forth an unremitting flood, and drive us home to a dry room and a cheerful fire.

Tuesday comes—a glorious day—the sun shining bright, a moderate breeze blowing aloft, and the thermometer down to 47. "All in good time yet," say the shopkeepers; "people must eat, that's one comfort." We want something besides butcher-meat for our Christmas dinner. Let us be off to the poulterer's, and see what he has got to show. We shall come upon him just round the corner. Here we are. Verily, the whole house is feathered like one huge bird, the fabulous roc of the Arabian Tales. The list of them defies all our skill in ornithology. Numbers there are that we know, and as many that are strangers to us—at least with their feathers on. Over the door is a pair of enormous swans, though we do not see the albatross, measuring nine feet across the wings, which we saw in the same place a couple of years back. Above the swans are bitterns, herons, hawks; here a peacock, and there a gigantic crane, besides a raven, and an eccentric collection

of birds never intended to be eaten, but which are only hung up aloft to impress the spectator with the indisputable fact, that the whole of the tribes of the air are under the potent enchantment and subject to the despotic beck and bidding of Mr. Pluck—and very proper too. Grouse, pheasants, partridges, and wild-fowl hang in countless numbers from the topmost floor down to the very pavement; pigeons in dense dead flocks; and snipes, thrushes, and larks bundled together by the neck in bulky tassels, fringe the solid breast-work of plucked geese and turkeys, which, with heads dangling in silent rows, lie close jammed in fleshy phalanx upon the groaning shop-boards. Hares in legions, and rabbits by the warren, line the walls or hang from the ceiling; and among them here and there the bright feathers of the mallard give a touch of colour to the dense masses of brown and gray. Gorged as the whole place is with the denizens of the air, the forest, the fen, and the farmyard, you are not for a moment to suppose that the store before your eyes is anything more than a mere indication of the proprietor's doings in the way of business. Lest you should fall into the simple error, that all this is all he can do, he politely informs you in a placard a yard long, that he has levied a contribution upon the county of Norfolk for thousands of turkeys and tens of thousands of geese, which are bound, under a heavy penalty, to be delivered within a given time. Think of that! and in the meanwhile look around you, and see what is going on. While you are gazing, the birds are going off by whole coveys. People with empty baskets are thronging in, and folks with baskets full are crowding out. Look at that stout woman tottering under the weight of two turkeys, three geese, a hare, and a brace of pheasants, to say nothing of a sucking-pig, stuffed with straw, and bearing a sprig of red-berried holly in his mouth, with his eye knowingly modelled to a wink, as though he were making faces at the destiny which has doomed him to the spit. Next come a jolly-looking butler, and a boy at his heels

carrying a basket filled with choice game; the butler gets into a cab, and the boy, having first hoisted his basket to the top, mounts guard by the side of the driver, and off they go. The place of the cab is instantly filled by a cart full of slaughtered geese, doubtless a part of the immense consignment from Norfolk; but the shop doorway is one crush of customers, and they can't be got in there—so they go in like bricks, being pitched through the open window to a shopman behind the counter, who tells them off, and in his turn pitches them down an open trap, where a band of Mr. Pluck's pluckers are plucking from morning to night and all night long. To-day is the great day for business. In matters of eating and drinking, the Londoner is not given to procrastination when he can avoid it; he has a passion for an extensive choice; and though he want but a sixpenny article, he will walk a mile to buy one from a stock of 10,000, rather than take one out of ten equally good which are offered at his own door. The appreciation of this truth has made Mr. Pluck's fortune, as it has made the fortunes of thousands besides.

But we must leave the poulterer to his traffic, and the butcher, and fishmonger, and grocer, and fruiterer, and all who have delicacies to sell, not forgetting the confectioner, who, up to the eyes in paste, is already preparing the Twelfth-cakes for *his* Christmas-day. They say that these cakes last from year to year, and that one which fails to go off in '52 may meet with a customer in '53. We know nothing about that, but we do know a young artist who has been at work for some weeks already, laying very spirited water-colour drawings on a ground of sugar, and a very pleasant working ground he says it is.

Christmas-day, bright with sunshine and slightly frosty, rises upon London very much like a Sunday, and the streets in the morning are thronged by the same bands of steady church-goers answering the call of the parish bells. Full service takes place in all the churches, which are profusely

decorated with boughs of evergreen. Christmas anthems are sung, and Christmas sermons are preached, and Christian charity is urged on behalf of the poor. Sermon over, we are tempted by the weather to whet our appetite with a walk of an hour through the city, in the course of which we encounter a hundred different groups, bound unmistakeably for the dinner-table of some hospitable host: charming young lasses, with little whity-brown parcels held between finger and thumb at one corner, and containing the new ribbon which is to make its first appearance on the fair neck at to-day's party; elder matrons carrying their spick-and-span-new caps in pin-fastened packets a shade larger; new-married couples, the husband with his young wife's satin shoes sticking out of his coat-pocket behind, and some flimsy mystery in tissue-paper in his hand, and not half hidden, as he thinks it is, beneath his coat, with which he dares not cover it for fear of a crush. Besides these, there are lawyers' clerks, with undeniable black bottles swathed in brown paper, and pushed up tightly under the left armpit, swaggering along as proudly as though bin No. 12 in their own cellar were crammed with fifty-dozen, and never dreaming that every passer-by is cognizant of their three-and-sixpenny purchase. Suddenly we find ourselves in a crowd, and, going with the stream, are borne into the centre of a multitude assembled round the entrance to a stable-yard, over which is painted in gigantic letters on a broad white sheet: "Welcome to the Christmas Feast;" and underneath, "God loveth a cheerful giver." Within are tents surmounted with banners inscribed with texts of Scripture, enforcing the duty of benevolence, and inviting the poor to enjoy its fruits. Christian charity is doing its work by wholesale. Crowds of the poor and ill-fed populace are streaming in, directed by a numerous band of policemen, and numbers are coming out loaded with the good old English fare of roast beef and plum-pudding, to say nothing of tea enough for a week's consumption. Trotty Veck is there with all his tribe; and every man, woman,

and child is armed with plate, dish, basin, or jug, for the reception of the welcome dole, which continues from one in the afternoon till late in the evening, and renders that particular district a marked contrast to all the rest of London on a Christmas afternoon. Elsewhere, there is a void and a silence in the streets, to which the stillness of the Sabbath is comparative uproar. Hundreds of thousands of revolving spits are about to surrender their savoury burdens; the multitudinous mouth of London waters at the impending feast, whose odour fills the air; the gastronomic treasures of the east and the west, the north and the south, of proximate Kew and far Cathay, are heaped for final sacrifice upon myriads of festive boards. All London is now in-doors, and "particularly engaged." Here and there an omnibus and a cab rattle along the paved road to the unwonted music of their own echoes, and for hours they have almost undisputed possession of the out-door world.

After dinner, we are tempted again to the scene of the poor man's feast. Introduced by a friend and subscriber we manage to make our way into the principal tent, where, in the course of the day, hundreds have dined upon substantial fare, of which the odours yet remaining are sufficient evidence. The place is one bower of canvas and foliage. Upon a platform at one end, a merry-faced orator is resounding the praises of a certain inestimable personage, amidst the cries of "Hear, hear!" and the uproarious bravos of the auditors. The merry-faced gentleman subsides with a general round of applause, and the inestimable personage comes forward to acknowledge the compliment. Shade of Father Christmas! it is the veritable Soyer himself, the prince of cooks, habited in his kitchen garb, his handsome face gleaming with exercise and good-humour. See how politely he bows to his humble friends, and hear if you can, for we can't, how handsomely he repudiates all claim to the praise so lavishly bestowed by the former speaker. Then a band of music strikes up, and M. Soyer

rushes into the kitchen, and we, mindful of certain annual anthems, in which we are pledged to take a part in the home circle, scramble through the motley crowd, and retrace our steps homewards.

The quiet that reigns all the afternoon and evening throughout the city is effectually broken before midnight, by which time the streets are populous again with groups of well-dressed visitors returning to their homes, noisy with mirth or heavy with wine; these reclining in cab or hackney, and those loudly chattering on the pavement, and beguiling the walk with jest or song. The rumble of wheels and the merry march of foot passengers continue for the best part of the night, and as they fade away into silence, Old Father Christmas vanishes in the morning mist.

We can hardly close these desultory sketches of Christmas-time without some brief allusion to the day after Christmas, which, through every nook and cranny of the great Babel, is known and recognised as "Boxing Day,"—the day consecrated to *bakshéesh*, when nobody, it would almost seem, is too proud to beg, and when everybody who does not beg is expected to play the almoner. "Tie up the knocker — say you're sick, you are dead," is the best advice perhaps that could be given in such cases to any man who has a street-door and a knocker upon it. Now is your time to make out a new list of occupations, and to become acquainted with all the benefactors whose good offices you have been enjoying all the year through without one thought of the gratitude you owe them. Dab the first is the sweep, of course, who must be paid over again for sweeping your chimneys. Half fearing that if you refuse you may get a smoky house for the rest of the year, you consent for the sake of your lungs, and he is off. You sit down to breakfast, and with the first slice of toast comes dab the second. You glance out of the window, and see a couple of long-coated varlets bearing battered French horns, and you cheerfully bestow another shilling on the minstrels, as you

suppose of the wet and dismal nights. They are off to the next door, and before you have drunk your second cup comes dab the third—the turncock wants *his* water-rate. You do as you like with him, but if you turn him off empty, he does the same with the water, and leaves you dependent on your neighbours for a supply. Dab the fourth is the dustman, and you must down with your dust, or you will get the dust down your throat the next time the bin has to be cleared out. Dab the fifth waters the roads in summer, and wants to wet his whistle at your expense. Dab the sixth scrapes them in winter, and now comes to scrape acquaintance with you in the affectionate desire of drinking your health "at this jiful season." Dab the seventh—what! the waits again? I gave the fellow a shilling just now." "Yes, sir," says Betty, "but them fellers had no right to it." Here the leader and spokesman of the band of *genuine* waits makes his appearance, bowing and scraping at the parlour-door: "Sorry to *hob*trude, sir, but ours is the genuine waits, sir. That there gang what you subscribed, sir, only goes a collectin'—they never plays nothin'; they aint musicians, only thievin' scamps as robs honest men. You rek'lect my vice, sir, a wishin' of you a merry Christmas and a happy new year." Of course you recognise his "vice," for he bellows as loud as he did last Wednesday at midnight, and of course, too, you pay the shilling over again. Dab the eighth is the lamp-lighter, who enlightens you on the subject of his large merits and small pay. Dab the ninth is the grocer's boy, who is followed by a shoal of dabs in regular succession, comprising every mentionable trade, until at length your patience being exhausted, and your small-change at the same low ebb, you rush desperately into a greatcoat and out of the house, and leave Betty to fight the battle of *baksheesh* as well as she can, which she generally does victoriously by declining to show a front to the enemy, and leaving the dabs to come as slowly as they choose to the unwilling conviction, that "it's no use knocking at the door any more."

OUR TERRACE.

London has been often compared to a wilderness—a wilderness of brick, and so in one sense it is; because you may live in London all the days of your life if you choose—and, indeed, if you don't choose, if you happen to be very poor—without exciting observation, or provoking any further questioning than is comprised in a demand for accurate guidance from one place to another, a demand which might be made upon you in an Arabian desert, if there you chanced to meet a stranger. But London is something else besides a wilderness—indeed it is everything else. It is a great world, containing a thousand little worlds in its bosom; and pop yourself down in it in any quarter you will, you are sure to find yourself in the centre of some peculiar microcosm distinguished from all others by features more or less characteristic.

One such little world we have lived in for a round number of years; and as we imagine it presents a picture by no means disagreeable to look upon, we will introduce the reader, with his permission, into its very limited circle, and chronicle its history for one day as faithfully as it is possible for anything to do, short of the Daguerreotype and the tax-gatherer. Our Terrace, then—for that is our little world—is situated in one of the northern, southern, eastern, or western suburbs—we have reasons for not being particular—at the distance of two miles and three-quarters from the black dome of St. Paul's.

It consists of thirty genteel-looking second-rate houses, standing upon a veritable terrace, at least three feet above the level of the carriage-way, and having small gardens enclosed in iron palisades in front of them. The garden gates open upon a pavement of nine feet in width; the carriage-road is thirty feet across; and on the opposite side is another but lower terrace, surmounted with handsome semi-detached villas, with ample flower-gardens both in front and rear, those in the front being planted, but rather sparingly, with limes, birches, and a few specimens of the white-ash, which in summer-time overshadow the pavement, and shelter a passing pedestrian when caught in a shower. At one end of Our Terrace there is a respectable butcher's shop, a public-house, and a shop which is perpetually changing owners, and making desperate attempts to establish itself as something or other, without any particular partiality for any particular line of business. It has been by turns a print shop, a stationer's, a circulating library, a toy-shop, a Berlin-wool shop, a music and musical-instrument shop, a haberdasher's shop, a snuff and cigar shop, and one other thing which has escaped our memory—and all within the last seven years. Each retiring speculator has left his stock-in-trade, along with the good-will, to his successor; and at the present moment it is a combination of shops, where everything you don't want is to be found in a state of dilapidation, together with a very hungry-looking proprietor, who, for want of customers upon whom to exercise his ingenuity, pulls away all day long upon the accordion to the tune of "We're a' Noddin'." The other end of Our Terrace has its butcher, its public-house, its grocer, and a small furniture-shop, doing a small trade, under the charge of a very small boy. Let thus much suffice for the physiology of our subject. We proceed to record its history, as it may be read by any one of the inhabitants who chooses to spend the waking hours of a single day in perusing it from his parlour window.

It is a fine morning in the middle of June, and the clock of

the church at the end of the road is about striking seven, when the parlour shutters and the street doors of the terrace begin to open one by one. By a quarter past, the servant girls, having lighted their fires, and put the kettle on to boil for breakfast, are ostensibly busy in sweeping the pathways of the small front-gardens, but are actually enjoying a simultaneous gossip together over the garden railings —a fleeting pleasure, which must be nipped in the bud, because master goes to town at half-past eight, and his boots are not yet cleaned, or his breakfast prepared. Now the bed-room bell rings, which means hot water; and this is no sooner up, than mistress is down, and breakfast is laid in the parlour. At a quarter before eight, the eggs are boiled, and the bacon toasted, and the first serious business of the day is in course of transaction. Mr. Jones of No. 9, Mr. Robinson of No. 10, and Mr. Brown of No. 11, are bound to be at their several posts in the city at nine o'clock; and having swallowed a hasty breakfast, they may be seen, before half-past eight has chimed, walking up and down the terrace chatting together, and wondering whether "that Smith," as usual, means to keep the omnibus waiting this morning, or whether he will come forth in time. Precisely as the half hour strikes, the tin horn of the omnibus sounds its shrill blast, and the vehicle is seen rattling round the corner, stopping one moment at No. 28, to take up Mr. Johnson. On it comes, with a fresh blast, to where the commercial trio are waiting for it; out rushes Smith, wiping his mouth, and the "bus," swallowing up the whole four, rumbles and trumpets on to take up Thompson, Jackson, and Richardson, who, cigars in mouth, are waiting at a distance of forty paces off to ascend the roof. An hour later, a second omnibus comes by on the same benevolent errand, for the accommodation of those gentlemen, more favoured by fortune, who are not expected to be at the post of business until the hour of ten. As Our Terrace does not stand in a direct omnibus route, these are all the "buses" that will pass in the course

of the day. The gentlemen whom they convey every morning to town are regular customers, and the vehicles diverge from their regular course in order to pick them up at their own doors.

About half-past nine, or from that to a quarter to ten, comes the postman with his first delivery of letters for the day. Our Terrace is the most toilsome part of his beat, for having to serve both sides of the way, his progress is very like that of a ship at sea sailing against the wind. R'tat he goes on our side, then down he jumps into the road—B'bang on the other side—tacks about again, and serves the terrace—off again, and serves the villas, and so on till he has fairly epistolised both sides of the way, and vanished round the corner. The vision of his gold band and red collar is anxiously looked for in the morning by many a fair face, which a watchful observer may see furtively peering through the drawing-room window-curtains. After he has departed, and the well-to-do merchants and employers who reside in the villas opposite have had time to look over their correspondence, come sundry neat turn-outs from the stables and coach-houses in the rear of the villas; a light, high gig, drawn by a frisky grey, into which leaps young Oversea the shipbroker—a comfortable, cushioned four-wheel drawn by a pair of bay ponies, into which old Discount climbs heavily, followed perhaps by his two daughters, bound on a shopping-visit to the city—and a spicy-looking, rattling trap, with a pawing horse, which has a decided objection to standing still, for Mr. Goadall, the wealthy cattle-drover. These, with other vehicles of less note, all roll off the ground by a quarter after ten o'clock or so; and the ladies and their servants, with some few exceptions, are left in undisputed possession of home, while not a footfall of man or beast is heard in the sunshiny quiet of the street.

The quiet, however, is broken before long by a peculiar and suggestive cry. We do not hear it yet ourselves, but Stalker, our black cat and familiar, has caught the well-known accents,

and with a characteristic crooning noise, and a stiff perpendicular erection of tail, he sidles towards the door, demanding as plainly as possible, to be let out. Yes, it is the cats-meat man. "Ca' me-e-et—me-yet—me-e-yet!" fills the morning air, and arouses exactly thirty responsive feline voices—for there is a cat to every house—and points thirty aspiring tails to the zenith. As many hungry tabbies, sables, and tortoise-shells as can get out of doors, are trooping together with arched backs upon the pavement, following the little pony-cart, the cats' commissariat equipage, and each one, anxious for his daily allowance, contributing most mewsically his quota to the general concert. We do not know how it is, but the cats-meat man is the most unerring and punctual of all those peripatetic functionaries who undertake to cater for the consumption of the public. The baker, the butcher, the grocer, the butterman, the fishmonger, and the coster, occasionally forget your necessities, or omit to call for your orders—the cats-meat man never. Other traders, too, dispense their stock by a sliding-scale, and are sometimes out of stock altogether: Pussy's provider, on the contrary, sticks to one price from year's end to year's end, and never, in the memory of the oldest Grimalkin, was known to disappoint a customer. A half-penny for a cat's breakfast has been the regulation-price ever since the horses of the metropolis began to submit to the boiling process for the benefit of the feline race.

By the time the cats have retired to growl over their allowance in private, the daily succession of nomadic industrials begin to lift up their voices, and to defile slowly along Our Terrace, stopping now and then to execute a job or effect a sale when an opportunity presents itself. Our limits will not allow us to notice them all, but we must devote a few paragraphs to those without whom our picture would be incomplete.

First comes an ingenious lass of two or three-and-twenty, with a flaming red shawl, pink ribbons in her bonnet, and the

hue of health on a rather saucy face. She carries a large basket on her left arm, and in her right hand she displays to general admiration a gorgeous group of flowers, fashioned twice the size of life, from tissue-paper of various colours. She lifts up her voice occasionally as she marches slowly along, singing, in a clear accent: "Flowers—ornamental papers for the stove—flowers! paper-flowers!" She is the accredited herald of summer—a phenomenon, of late years, of very tardy appearance. We should have seen her six weeks ago, if the summer had not declined to appear at the usual season. She is the gaudy, party-coloured ephemera of street commerce, and will disappear from view in a fortnight's time, to be seen no more until the opening of next summer. Her wares, which are manufactured with much taste, and with an eye to the harmony of colours, are in much request among the genteel housewives of the suburbs. They are exceedingly cheap, considering the skill which must be applied in their construction. They are all the work of her own hands, and have occupied her time and swallowed up her capital for some months past. She enjoys almost a monopoly in her art, and is not to be beaten down in the price of her goods. She knows their value, and is more independent than an artist dares to be in the presence of a patron. Her productions are a pleasant summer substitute for the cheerful fire of winter; and it is perhaps well for her that, before the close of autumn, the faded hues of the flowers, and the harbour they afford to dust, will convert them into waste paper, in spite of all the care that may be taken to preserve them.

Paper Poll, as the servants call her, is hardly out of sight, and not out of hearing, when a young fellow and his wife come clattering along the pavement, appealing to all who may require their good offices in the matter of chair-mending. The man is built up in a sort of cage-work of chairs stuck about his head and shoulders, and his dirty phiz is only half visible through a kind of grill of legs and cross-bars. These

are partly commissions which, having executed at home, he is carrying to their several owners. But as everybody does not choose to trust him away with property, he is ready to execute orders on the spot; and to this end his wife accompanies him on his rounds. She is loaded with a small bag of tools suspended at her waist, and a plentiful stock of split-cane under one arm. He will weave a new cane-seat to an old chair for 9d., and he will set down his load and do it before your eyes in your own garden, if you prefer that to entrusting him with it; that is, he will make the bargain, and his wife will weave the seat under his supervision, unless there happen to be two to be repaired, when husband and wife will work together. We have noticed that it is a very silent operation, that of weaving chair-bottoms; and that though the couple may be seated for an hour and more together, rapidly plying the flexible canes, they never exchange a word with each other till the task is accomplished. Sometimes the wife is left at a customer's door working alone, while the husband wanders further on in search of other employment, returning by the time she has finished her task. But there are no chairs to mend this morning on Our Terrace, and our bamboo friends may jog on their way.

Now resounds from a distance the cry of "All a-growin' an' a-blowin'— all a-blowin', a-blowin' here!" and in a few minutes the travelling florist makes his appearance, driving before him a broad-surfaced hand-cart, loaded in profusion with exquisite flowers of all hues, in full bloom, and, to all appearance, thriving famously. It may happen, however, as it has happened to us, that the blossoms now so vigorous and blooming, may all drop off on the second or third day; and the naked plant, after making a sprawling and almost successful attempt to reach the ceiling for a week or so, shall become suddenly sapless and withered, the emblem of a broken-down and emaciated sot—and, what is more, ruined from the self-same cause, an overdose of stimulating fluid. It may happen,

on the other hand, that the plant shall have suffered no trick of the gardener's trade, and shall bloom fairly to the end of its natural term. The commerce in blossoming flowers is one of the most uncertain and dangerous speculations in which the small street-traders of London can engage. When carried on under favourable circumstances, it is one of the most profitable, the demand for flowers being constant and increasing; but the whole stock-in-trade of a small perambulating capitalist may be ruined by a shower of rain, which will spoil their appearance for the market, and prevent his selling them before they are overblown. Further, as few of these dealers have any means of housing this kind of stock safely during the night, they are often compelled to part with them, after an unfavourable day, at less than prime cost, to prevent a total loss. Still, there are never wanting men of a speculative turn of mind, and the cry of "All a-blowin' an' a-growin'" resounds through the streets as long as the season supplies flowers to grow and to blow.

The flower-merchant wheels off, having left a good sprinkling of geraniums in our neighbours' windows; and his cousin-german, "the graveller," comes crawling after him, with his cart and stout horse in the middle of the road, while he walks on one side of the pavement, and his assistant on the other. This fellow is rather a singular character, and one that is to be met with probably nowhere upon the face of the earth but in the suburbs of London. He is, *par excellence*, the exponent of a feeling which pervades the popular mind in the metropolis on the subject of the duty which respectable people owe to respectability. It is impossible for a housekeeper in a neighbourhood having any claims to gentility, to escape the recognition of this feeling in the lower class of industrials. If you have a broken window in the front of your house, the travelling glazier thinks, to use his own expression, that *you have a right* to have it repaired, and therefore that he, having discovered the fracture, has a right to the job of mending it.

If your bell-handle is out of order or broken off, the travelling bellman thinks he has a right to repair it, and bores you, in fact, until you commission him to do so—and so on. In the same manner, and on the same principle, so soon as the fine weather sets in, and the front-gardens begin to look gay, the graveller loads his cart with gravel, and shouldering his spade, crawls leisurely through the suburbs with his companion, peering into every garden; and whèrever he sees that the walks are grown dingy or moss-grown, he knocks boldly at the door, and demands to be set to work in mending your ways. The best thing you can do is to make the bargain and employ him at once; if not, he will be round again to-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow, and bore you into consenting at last. You live in a respectable house, and you *have a right* to keep your garden in a respectable condition—and the graveller is determined that you shall do so: has he not brought gravel to the door on purpose? it will cost you but a shilling or two. Thus he lays down the law in his own mind; and sooner or later, as sure as fate, he lays down the gravel in your garden.

While the graveller is patting down the pathway round Robinson's flower-bed, we hear the well-known cry of a countryman whom we have known any time these ten years, and who, with his wife by his side, has perambulated the suburbs for the best part of his life. He has taken upon himself the patronage of the laundry department, and he shoulders a fagot of clothes-poles, ten feet long, with forked extremities, all freshly cut from the forest. Coils of new rope for drying are hanging upon his arm, and his wife carries a basket well stocked with clothes-pins of a superior description, manufactured by themselves. The cry of "Clo'-pole-line-pins" is one long familiar to the neighbourhood; and as this honest couple have earned a good reputation by a long course of civility and probity, they enjoy the advantage of a pretty extensive connection. Their perambulations are confined to the suburbs, and it is a question if they ever enter London proper from

one year's end to another. It is of no use to carry clothes-poles and drying-lines where there are no conveniences for washing and drying.

Next comes a travelling umbrella-mender, fagoted on the back like the man in the moon of the nursery rhyme-book. He is followed at a short distance by a travelling tinker, swinging his live-coals in a sort of tin censer, and giving utterance to a hoarse and horrible cry, intelligible only to the cook who has a leaky saucepan. Then comes the chamois-leather woman, bundled about with damaged skins, in request for the polishing of plate and plated wares. She is one of that persevering class who will hardly take "No" for an answer. It takes her a full hour to get through the terrace, for she enters every garden, and knocks at every door from No. 1 to No. 30. In the winter-time she pursues an analogous trade, dealing in what may strictly be termed the raw material, inasmuch as she then buys and cries hare-skins and rabbit-skins. She has, unfortunately, a notoriously bad character, and is accused of being addicted to the practice of taking tenpence and a hare-skin in exchange for a counterfeit shilling.

By this time it is twelve o'clock and past, and Charley Coster, who serves the terrace with vegetables, drives up his stout cob to the door, and is at the very moment we write bargaining with Betty for new potatoes at threepence-halfpenny a pound. Betty declares it is a scandalous price for potatoes. "Yes, dear," says Charley, "an' another scan'lous thing is, that I can't sell 'em for no less." Charley is the most affectionate of costers, and is a general favourite with the Abigails of the terrace. His turn-out is the very model of a travelling green-grocer's shop; well stocked with all the fruits and vegetables of the season; and he himself is a model of a coster, clean shaved, clean shod, and trimly dressed, with a flower in his button-hole, an everlasting smile upon his face, and the nattiest of neck-ties. The cunning rogue pretends

to be smitten with Betty, and most likely does the same with all the other Bettys of the neighbourhood, to all of whom he chatters incessantly of everything and everybody—save and except of the wife and three children waiting for him at home. He will leave a good portion of his stock behind him when he quits the terrace.

After Charley has disappeared, there is a pause for an hour or two in the flow of professionals past Our Terrace. The few pedestrians that pass along are chiefly gentlefolks, who have come abroad this fine morning for an airing—to take a constitutional, and to pick up an appetite for dinner. You may chance to hear the cry of "Oranges and nuts," or of "Cod—live cod," and you may be entertained by a band of musicians in a gaily-coloured van patrolling for the purpose of advertising the merits of something or other which is to be had for nothing at all, or the next thing to it, if you can prevail upon yourself to go and fetch it. Perhaps Punch and Judy will pitch their little citadel in front of your dwelling; or, more likely still, a band of mock Ethiopians, with fiddle, castanets, and banjo, may tempt your liberality with a performance of *Uncle Ned* or *Old Dan Tucker;* or a corps of German musicians may trumpet you into a fit of martial ardour; or a wandering professor of the German flute soothe you into a state of romance.

As the afternoon wears on the tranquillity grows more profound. The villas opposite stand asleep in the sunshine; the sound of a single footstep is heard on the pavement; and anon you hear the feeble, cracked voice of old Willie, the water-cress man, distinctly articulating the cry of "Water-cresses; fine brown water-cresses; royal Albert water-cresses; the best in London—everybody say so." The water-cresses are welcomed on the terrace as an ornament, and something more, to the tea-table; and while tea is getting ready for the inhabitants of the terrace, the dwellers in the opposite villas are seen returning to dinner. The lame match-man now hob-

bles along upon his crutches, with his little basket of lucifers suspended at his side. He is thoroughly deaf and three parts dumb, uttering nothing beyond an incomprehensible kind of croak by way of a demand for custom. He is a privileged being, whom nobody thinks of interfering with. He has the *entrée* of all the gardens on both sides of the way, and is the acknowledged depositary of scraps and remnants of all kinds which have made their last appearance upon the dinner or supper table.

About five o'clock, the tinkling note of the muffin-bell strikes agreeably upon the ear, suggestive of fragrant souchong and bottom-crusts hot, crackling, and unctuous. Now ensues a delicate savour in the atmosphere of the terrace kitchens, and it is just at its height when Smith, Brown, Jones, and Robinson are seen walking briskly up the terrace. They all go in at Smith's, where the muffin-man went in about half an hour before, and left half his stock behind him. By six o'clock the lords and ladies of Our Terrace are congregated round their tea-urns; and by seven, you may see from one of the back-windows a tolerable number of the lords, arrayed in dressing-gowns and slippers, and some of them with corpulent meerschaums dangling from their mouths, strolling leisurely in the gardens in the rear of their dwellings, and amusing themselves with their children, whose prattling voices and innocent laughter mingle with the twittering of those suburban songsters, the sparrows, and with the rustling of the foliage, stirred by the evening breeze. These pleasant sounds die away by degrees. Little boys and girls go to bed; the gloom of twilight settles down upon the gardens; candles are lighted in the drawing-rooms, and from a dozen houses at once pianofortes commence their harmony. At No. 12, the drawing-room windows are open, though the blinds are down; and the slow-pacing policeman pauses in his round, and leans against the iron railings, being suddenly brought up by the richly-harmonious strains of a glee for three voices: Brown,

Jones, and Robinson are doing the *Chough and Crow;* and Smith, who prides himself on his semi-grand, which he tunes with his own hands once a week, is doing the accompaniment in his best style. The merry chorus swells delightfully upon the ear, and is heard half-way down the terrace; the few foot-passengers who are passing stop under the window to listen, till one of them is imprudent enough to cry "Encore," when down go the windows, and the harmonious sounds are shut in from vulgar ears.

It is by this time nearly half-past nine o'clock, and now comes the regular nightly "tramp, tramp" of the police, marching in Indian file, and heavily clad in their night-gear. They come to replace the guardians of the day by those of the night. One of the number falls out of the line on the terrace, where he commences his nocturnal wanderings, and guarantees the peace and safety of the inhabitants for the succeeding eight hours; the rest tramp onwards to their distant stations. The echoes of their iron heels have hardly died away, when there is a sudden and almost simultaneous eruption from every garden-gate on the terrace of clean-faced, neat-aproned, red-elbowed servant-girls, each and all armed with a jug or a brace of jugs, with a sprinkling of black bottles among them, and all bound to one or other of the public-houses which guard the terrace at either end. It is the hour of supper; and the supper-beer, and the after-supper night-caps, for those who indulge in them, have to be procured from the publican. This is an occasion upon which Betty scorns to hurry; but she takes time by the forelock, starting for the beer as soon as the cloth is laid, and before master has finished his pipe, or his game of chess, or Miss Clementina her song, in order that she may have leisure for a little gossip with No. 7 on the one hand, or No. 9 on the other. She goes out without beat of drum, and lets herself in with the street-door key without noise, bringing home, besides the desiderated beverage, the news of the day, and the projects of next door

for the morrow, with, it may be, a plan for the enjoyment of her next monthly holiday.

Supper is the last great business of the day upon Our Terrace, which, by eleven at night, is lapped in profound repose. The moon rides high in mid-sky, and the black shadows of the trees lie motionless on the white pavement. Not a foot-fall is heard abroad; the only sound that is audible as you put your head out of the window, to look up at the glimmering stars and radiant moon, is the distant and monotonous murmur of the great metropolis, varied now and then by the shrill scream of a far-off railway-whistle, or the "cough, cough, cough" of the engine of some late train. We are sober folks on the terrace, and are generally all snug abed before twelve o'clock. The last sound that reaches our ears ere we doze off into forgetfulness is the slow, lumbering, earthquaky advance of a huge outward-bound waggon. We hear it at the distance of half a mile, and note distinctly the crushing and pulverizing of every small stone which the broad wheels roll over as they sluggishly proceed on their way. It rocks us in our beds as it passes the house; and for twenty minutes afterwards, if we are awake so long, we are aware that it is groaning heavily onwards, and shaking the solid earth in its progress—till it sinks away in silence, or we into the land of dreams.

THE CHARITABLE CHUMS' BENEFIT CLUB.

THE "Mother Bunch" public-house stands modestly aside from the din, traffic, and turmoil of a leading London thoroughfare, and retires, like a bashful maiden, from the gaze of a crowd to the society of its own select circle. It is situated in a short and rather narrow street, leading from an omnibus route running north from the city to nowhere in particular—or, if particulars must be given, to that complicated assemblage of carts, cabs, and clothes-lines; of manure heaps and disorganised pumps, and deceased pots of beer; of caged thrushes, blackbirds, and magpies; of dead dogs and cats, and colonies of thriving rats; of imprisoned terriers and goats let out on parole; of shrill and angry maternity and mud-loving infancy; and of hissing, curry-combing grooms and haltered horses, to which Londoners have given the designation of a Mews. Mr. Peter Bowley, the landlord of the "Mother Bunch," was the late butler of the late Sir Plumberry Muggs; and having succeeded, on the demise of the baronet, to a legacy of £500, and finding himself unable any longer to resist the charms of his seven years' comforter and counsellor, the cook, supplemented as they were by the attractions of a legacy of the like amount, he had united his destiny and wealth with hers in one common cause. The name of Sir Plumberry Muggs, even though its worthy proprietor was defunct, was still of

sufficient influence to procure a licence for his butler; and within a few months of his departure, Mr. Bowley had opened the new Inn and Tavern for the accommodation of Her Majesty's thirsty lieges. He had congratulated himself upon the selection of the site, and upon the suitableness of the premises to the requirements of a good trade; and his heart swelled within him, as he sat at the head of his own table, on the occasion of the house-warming, dispensing with no niggard hand the gratuitous viands and unlimited beer, which were at once to symbolise and inaugurate the hospitality of his mansion. He had a snug bar curtained with crimson drapery, for the convenience of those who, declining the ostentation of the public room, might prefer to imbibe their morning-draught with becoming privacy. He had a roomy tap-room, where a cheerful fire was to blaze the winter through, and a civil Ganymede minister to the wants of the humblest guest. There was a handsome parlour hung round with sporting-prints, and furnished with cushioned seats and polished mahogany tables, where the tradesmen of the neighbourhood might take their evening solace after the fatigues of business; and, more than all this, he had an immense saloon on the first-floor above, calculated for social conviviality on the largest scale, and furnished with mirrors, pictures, and an old grand-piano, a portion of the *lares* of the deceased Sir Plumberry Muggs.

Mr. Bowley, however, soon made the unpleasing discovery, that it is one thing to open an establishment of the kind—which had already swallowed up two-thirds of his capital—and another thing to induce the public to patronise it. Notwithstanding the overflow which had gathered at his house-warming, and the numberless good-wishes which had been expressed, and toasts which had been drunk to his prosperity, yet the prosperity did not come. Of the hundred and fifty enthusiastic well-wishers who had done honour to his entertainment, squeezed his hand, and sworn he was a trump, not

a dozen ever entered the house a second time. Do what he would, Bowley could not create a business; and the corners of his mouth began visibly to decline ere the experiment had lasted a couple of months. He made a desperate effort to get up a Free-and-easy; he had the old piano tuned, and set an old fellow to play upon it with open windows; exhibited a perpetual announcement of "A Concert this Evening;" and himself led off the harmony, to the tune of *Tally-ho*, at the top of his voice. It was all of no avail. The half-dozen grooms who joined in feeble chorus did not pay the expense of the gas; and he found the Free-and-easy, without abettors, the most difficult thing in the world. So he gave it up, and fell into a brown study, which engrossed him for a month. He had visions of Whitecross Street before his eyes; and poor Mrs. Bowley sighed again, and sighed in vain, after the remembrance of Sir Plumberry's kitchen, and its vanished joys. The only symptom of business was the gathering of half-a-dozen nightly customers, who sipped their grog for an hour or two in the parlour; and one of these, moreover, had never paid a farthing since he had patronised the house. There were twenty grogs scored up against him, besides a double column of beers. Mr. Bowley will put an end to that at any rate; so he signals the bibulous debtor, and having got him within the folds of the crimson curtains, he politely informs him, that credit is no part of his system of doing business, and requests payment. Mr. Nogoe, the convivial defaulter, who is a gentleman of fifty, who has seen the world, and knows how to manage it, is decidedly of Bowley's opinion—that, as a general rule, credit is a bad plan; inasmuch as, so far as his experience goes in the public line, to afford it to your customers is the first step towards losing it yourself. But he feels himself free to confess, that he is at the present moment under a cloud, and that it would be inconvenient to him to liquidate his score just then, though, of course, if Bowley insists, &c.. While Bowley is

pausing to consider which will be the best way to insist, Mr. Nogoe carelessly leads the conversation to another topic, and begins to descant upon the marvellous capabilities of the "Mother Bunch" for doing a first-rate trade; and hints mysteriously at the splendid thing that might be made of it, only supposing that his friend Bowley knew his own interest, and went the right way to work. The landlord, who is now all ear, and who knows his own interest well enough, pours out to his guest a glass of his favourite "cold without," and seating himself opposite him at the little table, encourages him to be more explicit. A long private and confidential conversation ensues, the results of which are destined to change the aspect of affairs at the "Mother Bunch." We shall recount the process for the information of our readers.

Next morning, Mr. Bowley is altogether a new man; brisk, cheerful, and active, he has a smile for everybody, and a joke and a "good morning" even for the cobbler, who has the cure of soles in that very questionable benefice, the Mews. He visits his tap-room guests, and informs them of a plan which is in operation to improve the condition of the labouring-classes, of which they will hear more by and by. He is profoundly impressed with the sublime virtues of charity, benevolence, brotherly love, and, as he terms it, "all that sort of thing." Day after day, he is seen in close confab with Mr. Nogoe, who is now as busy as a bee, buzzing about here, there, and everywhere, with rolls of paper in his hand, a pen behind his ear, and another in his mouth, and who is never absent an hour together from the "Mother Bunch," where he has a private room much frequented by active, middle-aged persons, of rather a seedy cast, and where he takes all his meals at the landlord's table. The first-fruits of these mysterious operations at length appear in the form of a prospectus of a new mutual-assurance society, under the designation of "The Charitable Chums' Benefit Club;" of which Mr. Nogoe, who has undertaken its organisation, is to act as

secretary and chairman at the preliminary meetings, and to lend his valuable assistance in getting the society into working order. Under his direction, tens of thousands of the prospectuses are printed, and industriously circulated among the artisans, labourers, small tradesmen, and serving-men in all parts of the town, both far and near. Promises of unheard-of advantages, couched in language of most affectionate sympathy, are addressed to all whom it may concern. The same are repeated again and again in the daily and weekly papers. A public meeting is called, and the names of intending members are enrolled; special meetings follow, held at the large room of the "Mother Bunch;" the enrolled members are summoned; officers and functionaries are balloted for and appointed; rules and regulations are drawn up, considered, adopted, certified, and printed. Mr. Nogoe is confirmed in his double function as secretary and treasurer. Subscriptions flow in; and, to Bowley's infinite gratification, beer and spirits begin to flow out. The Charitable Chums, though eminently provident, are as bibulous as they are benevolent; for every sixpence they invest for the contingencies of the future tense, they imbibe at least half-a-crown for the exigencies of the present. The society soon rises into a condition of astonishing prosperity. The terms being liberal beyond all precedent, the Charitable Chums becomes wonderfully popular. A guinea a week during sickness, besides medical attendance, and ten pounds at death, or half as much at the death of a wife, are assured for half the amount of subscription payable at the old clubs. The thing is as cheap as dirt. The clerk has as much as he can do to enregister the names of new applicants, and keep accounts of the entrance-money. By way of keeping the society before the public, special meetings are held twice a month, to report progress, and parade the state of the funds. Before the new society is a year old, they have nearly one thousand pounds in hand; and Bowley's house, now known far and wide as the centre

and focus of the Charitable Chums, swarms with that provident brotherhood, who meet by hundreds under the auspices of "Mother Bunch," to cultivate sympathy and brotherly love, and to irrigate those delicate plants with libations of Bowley's gin and Bowley's beer. The Free-and-easy is now every night choke-full of wide-mouthed harmonists. The "Concert this Evening" is no longer a mere mythic pretence, but a very substantial and vociferous fact. The old grand-piano, and the old, ragged player, have been cashiered, and sent about their business; and a bran-new Broadwood, presided over by a rattling performer, occupies their place. Bowley's blooming wife, attended by a brace of alcholic naiads, blossoms beneath the crimson drapery of the bar, and dispenses "nods and becks," and "wreathed smiles," and "noggins of *max*," and "three-outers," to the votaries of benevolence and "Mother Bunch;" and the landlord is happy, and in his element, because the world goes well with him.

When Whitsuntide is drawing near, a general meeting of the club is convened, for the purpose of considering the subject of properties. A grand demonstration, with a procession of the members, is resolved upon: it is to come off upon Whit-Monday. In spite of the remonstrance of a mean-spirited Mr. Nobody — who proposes that, by way of distinguishing themselves from the rest of the thousand-and-one clubs who will promenade upon that occasion, with music, flags, banners, brass-bands, big drums, sashes, aprons, and white wands, they, the Charitable Chums, shall walk in procession in plain clothes, and save their money till it is wanted — and in spite of five or six sneaking, stingy individuals, so beggarly minded as to second his proposition, and who were summarily coughed down as not fit to be heard, the properties were voted; and the majority, highly gratified at having their own way, gave *carte-blanche* to their officers to do what they thought right, and for the credit of the society. Accordingly, flags and banners of portentous size, together with

sashes, scarfs, and satin aprons, all inlaid with the crest of the Charitable Chums — an open hand, with a purse of money in it — were manufactured at the order of the secretary, and consigned in magnificent profusion to the care of Mr. Bowley, to be in readiness for the grand demonstration. A monster banner, bearing the designation of the society in white letters upon a ground of flame-coloured silk, hung on the morning of the day from the parapet of Bowley's house, and obscured the good "Mother Bunch," as she swung upon her hinges, in its fluttering folds. The procession, which went off in irreproachable style, was followed by a dinner at Highbury Barn, at which above a thousand members sat down to table; and after which, thanks were voted to the different officers of the club; and, in addition thereto, a gold snuff-box, with an appropriate inscription, was presented to Mr. Nogoe, for his unparalleled exertions in the sacred cause of humanity, as represented by their society.

The jovial Whitsuntide soon passed away, and so did the summer, and the autumn was not long in following; and then came the cold winds, and fogs, and hoar frost of November. The autumn had been sickly with fevers, and Dr. Dosem, the club's medical man, had more cases of typhus to deal with than he found at all pleasant or profitable, considering the terms upon which he had undertaken the physicking of the Charitable Chums. He was heard to say, that it took a deal of drugs to get the fever out of them; and that, though he worked harder than any horse, he yet lost more of his patients than he had fair reason to expect. With nearly fifteen thousand members, the deaths in the club became alarmingly frequent. Nogoe, as he took snuff out of his gold box, shrugged his shoulders at the rapid disappearance of the funds, as one ten-pound cheque after another was handed over to the disconsolate widows. His uneasiness was not at all alleviated by the reception of a bill of two hundred and fifty

pounds for properties, &c. among which stood his snuff-box, set down at thirty-five guineas, upon which he knew, for he had tried, that no pawnbroker would lend ten pounds. He called a special council, of all the officers of the club, and laid the state of affairs before them. The first thing they did was to pass a vote for the immediate payment of the property bills; a measure which is hardly to be wondered at, if we take into account that they were themselves the creditors. The treasurer handed them a cheque for the amount; and then, apprising them that there was now, with claims daily increasing, less than two hundred pounds in hand, which must of necessity be soon exhausted, demanded their advice. They advised a re-issue of prospectuses and advertisements; which being carried into effect at the cost of a hundred pounds, brought a shoal of fresh applicants, with their entrance-money, and for the moment relieved the pressure upon the exchequer.

But when the November fogs brought the influenza, and a hundred of the members were thrown upon their backs and the fund at once; when it became necessary to engage additional medical assistance; and when, in spite of unremitting energy in the departments of prospectusing, puffing, and personal canvassing, the money leaked out five times as fast as it came in, then Mr. Nogoe began to find his position peculiarly unpleasant, and anything but a bed of roses. With "fourscore odd" of sick members yet upon the books — with five deaths and three half-deaths unpaid — and the epidemic yet in full force, he beheld an unwholesome December threatening a continuation of sickness and mortality, and a balance at the banker's hardly sufficient to pay his own quarter's salary. Again he calls his colleagues together, and states the deplorable condition of affairs. The representatives of the five deceased members, whom Nogoe has put off from time to time on various ingenious pretences, having become aware of the meeting, burst in upon their deliberations, and after an exchange

of no very complimentary remonstrances, backed by vehement demands for immediate payment, are with difficulty induced to withdraw, while the committee enter upon the consideration of their cases. Nogoe produces his budget, from the examination of which it appears, that if they are paid in full, there will remain in the hands of the bankers, to meet the demands of the "fourscore odd" sick members, the sum of 4s. 7d. What is to be done? is now the question. A speechification of three hours, during which every member of the committee is heard in his turn, helps them to no other expedient than that of a subscription for the widows, and a renewed agitation, by means of the press and the bill-sticker, to re-establish the funds by the collection of fresh fees and entrance-money. The subscription, the charge of which is confided to a deputy, authorised to collect voluntary donations from the various lodges about town, turns out a failure: the widows, who want their ten pounds each, disgusted at the offer of a few shillings, flock in a body to the nearest sitting magistrate, and clamorously lay their case before his worship, who gravely informs them, that the Charitable Chums' Benefit Society being duly enrolled according to Act of Parliament, he can render them no assistance, as he is not authorised to interfere with their proceedings.

In the face of this exposure, the agitation for cramming the society down the throats of the public goes on more desperately than ever. By this means, Mr. Nogoe manages to hold on till Christmas, and then pocketing his salary, resigns his office in favour of Mr. Dunderhead, who has hitherto figured as honorary Vice-Something, and who enters upon office with a gravity becoming the occasion. Under his management, affairs are soon brought to a stand-still. Notwithstanding his profound faith in the capabilities of the Charitable Chums, and his settled conviction that their immense body must embrace the elements of stability, his whole course is but one rapid

descent down to the verge, and headlong over the precipice, of bankrupcy. The dismal announcement of "no effects," first breathed in dolorous confidence at the bedsides of the sick, soon takes wind. All the C. C.'s in London are aghast and indignant at the news; and the "Mother Bunch" is nightly assailed by tumultuous crowds of angry members, clamorous for justice and restitution. The good lady who hangs over the door-way, in no wise abashed at the multitude, receives them all with open arms. Indignation is as thirsty as jollity, and to their thirst at least she can administer, if she cannot repair their wrongs. Nogoe has vanished from the locality of the now thriving inn and tavern of his friend Mr. Peter Bowley, and in the character of a scapegoat, is gone forth to what point of the compass nobody exactly knows. The last account of him is, that he had gone to the Isle of Man, where he endeavoured to get up a railway on the Exhaustive Principle, but without effect. As for that excellent individual, Bowley, he appears among the diddled and disconsolate Chums in the character of a martyr to their interests. A long arrear of rent is due to him, as well as a lengthy bill for refreshments to the various committees, for which he might, if he chose, attach the properties in his keeping. He scorns such an ungentlemanly act, and freely gives them up; but as nobody knows what to do with them, as, if they were sold, they would not yield a farthing each to the host of members, they remain rolled up in his garret, and are likely to remain till they rot, the sole memorials of a past glory.

The Charitable Chums' Benefit Society has fulfilled its destiny, and answered the end of its creation. It has made the world acquainted with the undeniable merits of the "Mother Bunch," and encircled that modest matron with a host of bibulous and admiring votaries; it has elevated Bowley from the class of struggling and desponding speculators to a sub-

stantial and influential member of the Licensed Victuallers' Company: it has at once vastly improved the colour of his nose and the aspect of his bank-account; and while he complacently fingers the cash which it has caused to flow in a continual current into his pocket, he looks remarkably well in the character of chief mourner over its untimely fate.

HOW LONDON GROWS.

A DROP of ink from our pen, falling upon the pad of blotting-paper upon which it is our custom to lay the narrow strips of "cream-laid" upon which we write, suggests no inappropriate figure of the subject we are going to write about. A round, well-defined drop at first, it gradually dilates and expands in size, and assumes a ruggedness of outline as it enlarges, the little ridges flying off in every direction, radiating still farther and farther from the centre, just as the circle of London grows bigger and wider by stretching away on all sides from the original confines of the city. The comparison holds good so long as any moisture remains to be absorbed; but soon the ink dries up, and there is an end of it—which cannot be said of the bricks and mortar, the sum and substance of our theme.

In the little two-pair back-room where we now sit, with a few score of well-thumbed volumes for our sole companions, if we except the cheerful fire which brightens up gratefully for every morsel of food it gets, and all day long singeth a quiet tune—we sat on this day seven years. Nothing material has changed within the four walls since then; but without—on the other side of the thin window-pane which keeps out this cold March wind—everything is so completely transformed or superseded, that it really requires a powerful effort of the imagination to assure one's self of the fact, that we have not been spirited away into another region, or changed by wicked

magic into some other respectable elderly gentleman residing in some other equally respectable neighbourhood. *Then*—in those days of far eld—as we sat in our arm chair, and gazed out of the window, it was a lovely landscape that met our view—lovely at least in the eyes of a Londoner. The end-wall of our patch of a garden abutted upon an extensive tract of level land, cultivated as market-gardens and nursery-grounds, among which the little one-storied brick or wooden cottages of the cultivators sent up wreaths of smoke, which curled pleasantly among the poplar trees and aspens; while the voice of Polly Brown calling Bob her husband to his twelve o'clock dinner, or the prattle of children, or the song of the lark in the sky, which was heard all the summer-day long—were the only sounds which struck upon the ear, save the distant hum of London when the south-west wind blew. Beyond the garden and nursery-grounds, there rose a mixture of meadows and waste land, upon which we have often watched the fowler spreading his nets, and planting his decoys, waiting by the hour together on bended knee for the chance of titlark or goldfinch fluttering shyly above the toils. In the distance, stood the dark-green hill of Highgate, crowned with its solitary spire; to the left of which, a glimpse of further Hampstead terminated the prospect. *Now*, if we turn our eyes in the same direction, what do we see? Bricks and tiles, and staring windows, from which, for aught we know, a thousand eyes may be looking down upon us; and there, a few yards or so to the left, the deep gorge of a railway cutting, which has ploughed its way right through the centre of the market-gardens, and burrowing beneath the carriage-road, and knocking a thousand houses out of its path, pursues its circuitous course to the city. The cottages have vanished, and given place to a magnificent square, around which a score or more of tall streets, all undeniably genteel, and filled with inhabitants all undeniably genteel too, attest the gentility of the quarter. Where the lark sung in the clouds, there is no

ornithological utterance to be heard but that confounded chattering of impudent Cockney sparrows, which are invariably the first tenants that take possession of a London house, and are to its roof what, at a later period of its existence, the rats become to its cellars—a pest and a nuisance. Where the fowler was wont to spread his nets, the poulterer now spreads his fowls; the smell of the new-mown hay is superseded by the smell of burning bricks; and as for the green fields and the distant hills of Highgate and Hampstead, they might as well be a hundred miles off, for all the good they do us behind a screen of solid brick five or six furlongs in thickness.

But a truce to complainings. Let us endeavour to trace the progress of this mighty change, and see, if we can, how it is brought about. For the first symptoms of the approach of brick and mortar—the invasion of the country by the town, we must look further a-field than a stranger might suppose. The grass is waving, the oxen are browsing, and the sheep are nibbling at this moment on the sites of a hundred thousand houses, which are already in existence upon paper, locked up in lawyers' tin-cases, or in the architect's cabinet. The land upon which these are to be built is let upon short leases to gardeners, dairymen, cattle-drovers, and in some cases to farmers, who make the most of it for the short term they occupy, and with as little outlay as possible. At length contracts are completed, and the long-meditated plans have to be executed. On a sudden, the hedges and fences disappear; roads are staked out; and the verdant earth is flayed, the green hide being rolled up in strips of a foot in width, and sold for laying down in other places. This process is, however, often seriously interfered with by the travelling turf-seller, who never goes further than he can help for his merchandise, and feels that he has a natural right in all unfenced land. Then commences the sinking of clay-pits; the digging of flat ponds for the collection of water from all the rivulets or ditches in the neighbourhood; the erection of

high mounds, on which you may see a blind horse revolving in a perpetual circle, dragging round the ponderous single wheel that grinds the limestone; the setting up of pug mills for mixing the clay; and the piling of rough sheds, to screen the brick-makers from the heat of the sun during their toilsome labour, which, throughout the summer months, is pursued without intermission from the first glimmer of dawn until darkness puts an end to their work. In the course of a fortnight or less, the garden or the meadow is changed into a brick-factory, and soon interminable rows of gray bricks are seen stretching away in all directions, crowned with loose straw to protect them from passing showers. Then begins the burning of the bricks—a process in which the Londoners seem particularly unfortunate, judging from the lumps, as big as haystacks, which are here and there to be seen burnt into solid masses, and fit for nothing but to be broken up for road-making, and dear at a gift for that.

Pending the making of the bricks, foundations have been dug, and now a crop of handsome houses, arranged as streets, crescents, squares, or detached villas, springs out of the ground with a celerity hardly intelligible to the casual visitor. Simultaneously with the building, the carpenters' work has been going on in a huge temporary workshop erected on the spot. No sooner are the carcasses completed, than the interior fittings are ready to be adjusted; and if the demand for houses be brisk, or the neighbourhood a favourite one, you shall see a whole town born into being in a summer, and peopled ere the winter sets in by a colony of comfortable well-to-do strangers, who seem to have come into being for the express purpose of being absorbed into the evergrowing metropolis.

We have been describing the creation of a district of the genteeler sort, altogether new, and fashionably far from the seats of business. But it will as frequently happen, that the locality to be built upon is already occupied more or less with dwellings of the poorer class. There are, and always have

been, within our recollection, extensive outlying districts in the suburbs of London, very strongly resembling the heterogeneous regions of squatters in a new settlement. You are walking, for the sake of exercise, some fine morning in a quarter with which you are unacquainted, and determine to explore it for the sake of gratifying your curiosity. Suddenly you step off the pavement, out of the long brick-street, which it has taken you ten minutes to traverse, and find yourself in a new world. The road is black mould, sprinkled over with oyster-shells, broken crockery, and remnants of old saucepans, and sunk in ruts, a single pair, a foot deep, between which the grass grows rank and long; it is flanked by a couple of deep ditches, across which, on either side, at the distance of about twenty paces apart, a couple of rotten planks, laid side by side, serve for a bridge. Ghosts of forlorn donkeys, or at anyrate donkeys not in the flesh, wander moodily about, nosing the rank herbage, and anon waking the dismal echoes with a bray of disappointment at the unsavoury fare. The further side of either ditch is guarded by a hedge of alders, which, being but a sorry fence, is supplemented with the staves of old casks pitched all over, and surmounted with dry twigs and sticks carelessly thrown between the straggling branches of the alders. If you step upon the bridge of plank, and peep over the top of the blue door, the hinges of which you will observe are manufactured from an old shoe, you will see at the end of the patch of ground which serves as a garden, a wretched cottage of two rooms, in one of which a woman is working at the wash-tub, while a young girl is stretching a line between the forks of a few tall fagot-sticks, in preparation for drying the clothes. There is nothing in the garden save the fading remains of a potato-bed, and a few rows of gigantic cabbage-stumps, nearly a yard high, which may have been planted originally, for aught you know, when the cottage was first built. You pursue your way, and now the road is bedizened with fragments of shining tin, in circles

and triangles, and long strips, which cling about your feet; and glancing through the hedge at your left, you perceive the tinman, or tinker, which you choose, pattering away at a kettle which he holds between his knees, as he sits on the ground at the door of his wooden hut. The tinker's garden, however, is in better trim than the washerwoman's; he has no occasion to use it for a drying-ground; and, having a fancy for onions, he has laid out a pretty patch of them, and they are thriving well. Next to the tinker dwells a shoemaker, whose wife is again a washerwoman; and next to him is a basket-maker, who has a decent fence next the ditch, having devoted a few twigs from his store to the repair of the hedge. A little further on, and you come upon a settlement that covers a space of some hundreds of square acres; and observe that, with very few exceptions, all the dwellings are cottages of one floor, having little brick-chimneys protruding crookedly from their roofs, like the feet of a pigeon in the preterpluperfect tense through the crust of a pie. You will come to the conclusion, as you look around, that everybody's wife is a washerwoman, with the exception of the dog-stealer's, whose husband is too much of a gentleman to allow his better-half to waste her time at the tub, which she can spend more profitably in the exercise of his profession; and that a good many of the husbands, too, are in some sort washermen, engaged in the fetching, carrying, and hanging-out departments. Most of them, in spite of their confined quarters, take in lodgers, chiefly navvies and bricklayers' labourers, whom, it is to be presumed, they stow away in the little cock-lofts under the pantiles. Yonder is a little chapel called "Jireh," whence a very loud voice may be heard issuing on a Wednesday night or a Sunday morning; and not far from it, with a tattered union-Jack flying over the roof, is a Tom-and-Jerry shop, the landlord of which supplies treble X and ninepins for the accommodation of the neighbourhood.

But this happy district, which enjoys the designation of

Tittlebat Fields, or something very like it, has been let for building. The tenants are served with a summary notice to quit by a certain day. The happy man who has a little freehold on the spot is bought out, or he refuses to be bought out, and remains and lives in his beggarly cottage, till the light of heaven is shut out of it by an enclosure of high walls. The whole colony takes wing, and, scattering in all directions, settles down again in some kindred locality, further than ever from the centres of fashion. The mode of building upon a district such as this, differs very materially from that pursued in the former case. The bricks are not made upon the spot, but brought from the brick-grounds, which lie beyond the region. The level of the land is too low to allow of the required drainage, and has to be raised perhaps ten or a dozen feet. The first step, therefore, is the building of the roadways which are to intersect the district. These are raised much in the same manner as are the embankments for railways—by carting earth and rubbish from the nearest depositary, and shooting it on the spot. A lively German writer, in a late work, has described the inhabitants of London as residing in houses built in ditches on each side of the roads. He would have been more correct had he said, that the roads were built up to the level of the ceilings of the basement-rooms—such being in practice the general rule. The floor of the so-called underground kitchen of a London house was never really under ground, but was laid originally a trifle above the level of the soil, and even in many cases at a considerable elevation above the level. As fast as the roads are formed, the houses, built according to a certain plan, to which the builders are bound to adhere, rise rapidly on either side of them. It will be frequently observed, however, that they halt at a certain stage for weeks or months, and, indeed, occasionally for years, before they advance to completion. This is evidence of a state of affairs which we shall have to notice presently. As the advancing suburb pushes its way

forwards, it gradually eats up the old neighbourhood. What trees there are, are felled, unless they happen to stand in some patch allotted for a garden, or in the identical spot which forms the boundary between the footpath and the road, in which case they are always left standing, and are sure to operate as a recommendation in the eyes of new-comers. The abandoned cottages are broken up into material for the new houses, of which their old bricks go to form the party-walls; and hence it frequently comes to pass, that you may remove to a new house, and find it literally swarming with vermin before it has ever been inhabited by human beings. A couple of years or so suffices to transform Tittlebat Fields into Tittlebat Town, with a splendid new church and congregational chapel, and swarming with inhabitants. Where they all come from is a mystery not easily solved, and not accountable for by the increase of population, which, as we learn from the returns, goes on but at the rate of 400 or 500 a week—though that is something.

Of the art and mystery of the builder's occupation, we do not pretend to know much; but judging from the numbers engaged in it, and from the evidences of their industry constantly rising around us, it cannot be a very unprofitable business. Doubtless it requires a good capital to carry it on to the greatest advantage; but this is constantly done, and that in a pretty large way, by men of no capital at all, beyond a little ready-money to meet the Saturday-night's wages. Whole miles of streets in London are built upon speculation, somewhat in the following way: by men who have little to lose, and everything to hope for. Chips the carpenter joins with Hod the bricklayer in renting a piece of ground for a term of eighty or ninety years. Neither of them, perhaps, has money enough to erect a single house; but between them they contrive to get up a couple of carcasses as high as the second or third story, and there they stop. They can go no further; but at this stage of the proceeding the houses are mortgage-

able; and if the situation be a good one, holding out the prospect of a speedy tenancy, capitalists are readily to be found who will advance money upon mortgage for their completion; if, on the contrary, the situation be not promising, and there be any stigma of unhealthiness resting on the locality, the speculating builders may wait a long while for the relief of the mortgagee, which explains the phenomenon we have alluded to in a former paragraph. With the money advanced upon the two first houses, Messrs. Chips and Hod can finish them, and put up the semi-carcasses of a couple more; and so on and on until the whole of their land is covered. If the houses let—and that is almost invariably the case—they do well, and in course of time pay off the mortgages; if they do not let, the loss is comparatively little; and this, moreover, in the present day so rarely happens, that it forms the exception, and not the rule. Of course, in these speculations, everything depends upon the judgment of the builders. It will sometimes happen, that a row of houses built in a style of expense beyond the requirements of the neighbourhood, will have to stand empty, or to be let at an unremunerative rent; on the other hand, if the houses erected be such as to command but a low rent, the ground-rent, which is always high, the repairs, and the interest of capital, will be hardly covered by the receipts. Notwithstanding all such contingencies, however, the builders manage their affairs pretty satisfactorily. We could point to more than one who, a dozen years ago, wrought with their own hands at the carpenter's bench, and who are now in the receipt of a clear rental of above a thousand a year each, after all drawbacks are paid. If there be any mystery in this, the solution of it will be found in the difference between the rate at which money can be borrowed in the market, and the average income it produces when invested in inhabited houses.

The pedestrian who has been accustomed to perambulate the bounds of London during the last quarter of a century,

asks what has become of all those snug and luxurious mansions embosomed in the foliage of lofty elms, and surrounded with acres of lawn and shrubbery, the whole enclosed with high walls, and guarded by a comfortable porter's lodge, which, thirty, twenty years ago, stood like citadel sanctuaries in a hundred pleasant spots on the verge of the great Babel? Gradually they have nearly all disappeared. Mammon, under the specious aspect of "ground-rent," has come with the bray of his brazen trumpet, and the lofty walls have fallen as flat as those of Jericho at the blast of the rams' horns. The sacred groves have submitted to the axe; the carpeted greensward has given up its quiet being; the land being first advertised, "To be let on Building Leases—inquire of Threefoot Rule, Esq.," is swallowed up by all-devouring London; the mansion itself is nowhere, and the owner is off somewhere, with £5,000 a year added to his income.

This brings us naturally to a few words on ground-rent—the great bugbear of builders and speculators, and of all who have property in houses, and have not the good fortune to be the proprietors of a freehold. Of the ground within the boundaries of the city proper, it is probable that the larger proportion belongs to the corporation of London. Its value for building purposes is in the precise ratio of its contiguity to the channels of traffic. An out-of-the-way spot, comparatively unfrequented, may be rented at a moderate sum; whilst a single rood of land, in the very centre of activity, will realise a princely income. In one street you shall hire a house of a dozen rooms for £50 or £60 a year; and in another, you may pay £250 for a couple of rooms, one of which the daylight never enters from one year's end to the other. In the best situations, the value of the ground is so enormous, that the premises standing upon it add but a mere per-centage to the amount of the annual rent. We could point to houses hardly large enough for a comfortable family residence, in the occupation of tradesmen doing business behind their counters,

and paying for ground-rent alone £300, £400, and £500 a year each. This abnormal value has grown up with the increase of traffic; and the question has often been mooted, whether it is morally right that a factitious wealth, which the public has created, should be exclusively enjoyed by those who have done little or nothing towards producing it? Here is a question for the casuists, which we must leave them to decide.

Without the boundaries of the city, the land is mostly the property of the nobility and aristocracy of the country. The Edwards and Henrys of former times thoughtlessly gave away vast tracts of it to court favourites in reward for small services, real or imaginary. They little thought what a mine of wealth they were conferring upon the descendants of the fortunate recipients. The holders of these lands, however, were not slow in appreciating their value, and they bought up, while it could be done cheaply, the fields lying adjacent to their grants. At the present time, we must wander to a good distance from the city limits to get altogether clear of the estates of my Lord This, the Duke of That, or Earl Somebody, to say nothing of the lands of which Mother Church is the guardian. As London increased in size, these lands of course were covered with buildings, every one of which, in due time, became the property of the owners of the soil. The land is let for building rarely for a longer term than eighty or ninety years; and a condition of the lease binds the builder, his heirs, executors, and administrators, to deliver up the houses to the ground-landlord, *in good repair*, at the expiration of the term. This, be it observed, is no formal clause merely. We once rented a house, which "fell in," as it is termed, to the ground-landlord during our tenancy. Eighteen months before the close of the lease, a surveyor came down upon us, in the cause of the ground-landlord, and enforced a thorough overhauling of the dwelling from the roof to the cellars, with re-painting, re-papering, carpentering, and locksmithing, the cost of which

was deducted from the landlord's rent. The effect upon the incomes of the aristocracy of this mode of doing business, may be best estimated from the single fact, that there fell into the Duke of ——, a few years ago, owing to the lapse of the ground-leases of one estate, a clear rental which was estimated at £300,000 a year. In this manner, by building on land rented for a limited period, a species of architecture is produced which stands at the lowest point in the scale of taste.

There is an old distich which says,

> The realm of Old England shall never be undone,
> Till Highgate Hill stands in the middle of London.

The speculators in land for building appear to have perfect faith in this suggestive legend. Looking upon what has been done, and at what the railways promise to do, they recognise no boundary to the extension of the metropolis. Away to all points of the compass, and far beyond the limits of any town-district, all the purchaseable land has been bought and sold, and sold again. Even though utterly unproductive, as some of it is, it is constantly rising in value, and a good deal of it as constantly changing owners. This branch of speculation appears to be a favourite source of excitement among retired tradesmen—old hands at business, with judgments matured in the experience of bargains, not a few of whom, to our knowledge, have more than doubled their capital since they bade adieu to the shop-counter, and gave up, as they imagined finally, the idea of money-making. These cunning old fellows never build—they know better. They know that Highgate Hill will get into the middle of London in good time without their dabbling in bricks and mortar; but there is no reason why these substantial materials should not be made to pay toll to their sagacity as they proceed on their destined march. They may be met with on a dry walking-day, either in winter or summer, pacing a slope of ground, or measuring it with a walking-stick exactly a yard in length, or copying the con-

ditions of lease or sale into their corpulent pocket-books from the black board mounted on a pole, upon which the required information is inscribed in white letters. London advances through the gripe of their itching palms, and hastens to accomplish her destiny with a speed nothing retarded by their interference. Already have the columns of brick advanced to the very foot of Highgate Hill, and the green sides of that picturesque acclivity, spotted with red and white patches, begin to manifest unmistakeable symptoms of the advancing tide of population. Highgate Hill may never be the centre of the metropolis; but that it is destined, in a few short years, to be clad in a mantle of red brick, few who have witnessed the systematic measures in progress in that direction during the present reign will feel inclined to doubt.

THE CITY INQUEST FOR THE POOR.

I KEEP a shop in the City, and open it every morning as Bow Church bells are ringing out eight o'clock. I pay a very heavy rent, as well as Queen's taxes and poor's-rates; and I could do neither, to say nothing of maintaining my family, if I did not mind my business, and work hard. But, by the help of constant attention and industry, I am happy to say, I am able to make my shop keep me and my family too, which it does comfortably, and lifts me, in some sort, above the world, and enables me to bear the character, which I should always like to retain, of a respectable man.

We dwellers in London City proper are supposed to entertain a very high regard for respectability, and so we do; and I am going now to detail the operations of what, I suppose, must be called an institution altogether peculiar to the City, of which the world out of the City knows very little, and which has been in being I don't know how many centuries — before there were any poor-laws, or any "good Queen Bess;" and which must have been a respectable affair — if I am any judge of what that means — from the very first, whenever that was. It is a good thing to relieve necessity in any shape, and a better thing to help it to help itself; but to dispense charity without doing a mischief in some way or other, either by rewarding imposture, encouraging idleness, or repressing the springs of self-reliance or self-exertion, is about the hardest

business I have ever had to do with, and I have had some knotty affairs to get through in my time. Now, the various wards of the City do every year, I think, manage this difficult matter very carefully and efficiently, though not without a good deal of trouble; and as I think their mode of doing it sets a good example, I have made up my mind to let the public know something about the Inquest for the Poor, which comes off in December every year. I believe it will be a novelty to most people out of the City limits, and to not a few within them as well. What I know about it, I have derived from experience: that, indeed, is all I have to relate; and when I have told my tale, the reader will be as wise as I am, in this respect at least.

About the middle of last December, I received a citation to attend a wardmote, to be held in the school-room of my parish. I was in expectation of this summons, as, the parishioners being called upon in rotation, I knew that my turn would come on upon this occasion. The number of tradesmen, who must be all of respectable character, summoned to the first meeting, is always greater than the number required to serve on the inquest, because many find it very inconvenient, and others find it impossible, to give their services. Valid excuses are admitted in plea against the performance of the duty; but a frivolous excuse is not allowed; and a tradesman whose turn it is to serve, if he can prefer no good reason for not serving, must serve or pay the fine. Six guineas is the heavy penalty inflicted upon a recusant who declines service altogether. This preliminary meeting is called merely to insure a sufficient company to be in attendance in the vestry of —— Church, at the general wardmote held on St. Thomas's Day.

After an early breakfast on the morning of the day above named, I repaired to the vestry, which was very fully attended, and where, in the course of the forenoon, the common-councilmen for the ward were elected for the ensuing year, and, their

election settled, were all duly admonished respecting their duties by the chairman. Then, from the number of respectable tradesmen in attendance, myself and eleven others were elected to prosecute the inquest for that year on behalf of the poor; and we in our turn were admonished by the same authority, that we were not to compass any treason, nor to conspire against Her Majesty the Queen—than which, I am very sure, nothing could have been further from our thoughts. The inquest being thus incorporated, we proceeded to elect a foreman and a treasurer, and to decree fines for non-attendance. The fines were appropriated to the payment of expenses, no part of the money collected being available for any other purpose than that of charity. The collection commenced by a contribution from each member of the inquest, each giving liberally, and setting a generous example. All these necessary preliminaries being settled, every man of us got into a handsome cloak, trimmed with fur, hired for the occasion, at a cost of five shillings per head, and, with the beadle of the ward blazing in scarlet and gold, pacing majestically beneath a three-cornered hat, and pushing a ponderous gold mace in advance, we were marched off to Guildhall, to pass muster before Gog and Magog, and to be presented to his worship the lord mayor. His lordship, who was surrounded by a staff of officials in gorgeous liveries, was very glad to see us: indeed he told us so—said that he was extremely gratified at receiving so highly respectable a company, and expressed more than once his satisfaction at finding that we were so ready to act in the cause of charity as to sacrifice our valuable time, and unite together for the succour of the distressed. He addressed us, in fact, for nearly a minute and a half: after which, as time was pressing, and others were waiting to be presented, we were signalled forward to a side-door, and made a very sudden exit into the street, whence we marched back to the vestry to disrobe, with the exception of some few of our number, who knowing that the business of the charity was done for the day,

abandoned their cloaks to the care of the owner, who contrives generally to be in attendance at this critical moment, and proceeded to look after their own private affairs. We all met, however, in the evening, and partook of a substantial dinner, to which, according to a custom which has prevailed from time immemorial, the churchwardens of the parish and the foreman and treasurer of the inquest of the preceding year were invited. The dinner went off, as a dinner should do, with perfect harmony and good feeling; and some very excellent speeches were made on the subject of the inquest — its undeniable efficacy and utility, and its great antiquity. We broke up at a sober hour, each member being charged to present himself at the vestry at nine in the morning on that day week, under the penalty of half-a-guinea.

It would have suited my interests very well, when the day came round, to have forfeited my half-guinea, and have attended exclusively to my own business; but judging it more to my credit to go through with the work I had undertaken, I was at my post, together with several of my colleagues, before the hour had struck. Some of our members did not come at all the first day, but sent their half-guineas; others, having to come in from the suburbs before omnibus-time, arrived too late, and were fined in smaller sums for the breach of punctuality. Our party being at length complete, to the number of ten, we indue our cloaks, and, pioneered by the ward-beadle with his ponderous mace, we sally forth to feel the charitable pulse of several parishes — ten good men and true, swathed to the chin in voluminous folds of broad-cloth fringed with fur, and headed by the ample proportions of the mace-bearer in scarlet and cloth of gold; our apparition, and our mission too, were plainly a mystery to the major part of the population, who, seeing us but once a year, and then but momentarily, as the procession emerges suddenly from one door to plunge into another, do not very well know what to make of it. "Is that there a buryin' or a marryin'?" "What's that

lot o' fellows after?" "What's up now, Jem?" "Is that red-legged cove Cardinal Wiseman?"—such are a few of the inquiries which from time to time testified the astonishment of the uninitiated; to all of which our imperturbable leader opposed a face as impenetrable as that of the sphinx of the Desert. We should have been sadly at a loss, by the way, without him. He knew every soul in the whole ward who would come down to the extent of a sixpence for the sake of the poor; and he led his small phalanx boldly to the charge through all impediments. Under his guidance, we did what certainly we should never have attempted without it. We stormed the stout citadels of the merchants, and carried their strongholds up as high as the third and fourth floors, and captured many a poor man's dinner from the very jaws of the cash-box. We dived into cellars, and crouched and crept into subterranean dens. We threaded muddy lanes, and wandered among bewildering wharfs, and mounted lofts and sheds, and squeezed ourselves into all sorts of out-of-the-way slums. We climbed ladders leading up into creaking timber galleries, and got into regions of old planks and cobwebs, dim with dust and odorous with ancient smells. We assailed the scholar at his studies, and the craftsman at his labour, and from all and each we met with a courteous reception, and gathered the sinews of benevolence. The dispositions of men vary in few things more than in their several modes of conferring a favour. Some of our most liberal donors thoughtfully sent their bank-notes to the vestry, to save us the trouble of waiting upon them: others, on the contrary, levied the full value of their gifts, by keeping us wearily waiting before we got them. A barber, whom we found at his block busily weaving a wig, and whose diminutive crib would not contain half our company, apologised because it was not in his power to do much for us, and then diffidently tendered a guinea. A portly dealer in feminine luxuries talked largely of the claims of our indigent brethren, and the sacred obligations of charity, and wound up his sono-

rous homily with the climax of half-a-crown. We found one burly gentleman, buried up to the elbows in red tape and legal documents, who professed a perfect horror, a rooted antipathy, to the poor in every shape, and who had a decided conviction that poverty was a nuisance which ought to be put down. When he had said this, and a great deal more, he very consistently lent a hand towards abating the nuisance, by presenting us with a contribution of double his usual annual subscription. When we had got out of earshot, our experienced chaperon remarked to me: "When I heer'd him agoin' on so, I knowed he was agoin' to come down 'ansome. He's a wery nice genelman, what enjoys a grumble, and don't mind paying for it!"

Our domiciliary visits occupied between three and four days, and the rain fell in torrents during the whole time. We were wet through in spite of the cloaks we wore, but canvassed the whole district successfully notwithstanding, and probably collected every shilling that was to be got. Our guide had so often felt the pulse of the whole ward in this way, that he never suffered us to waste our time or our demands upon those whom he knew to be impracticable; and thus we got through the business much more quickly, as well as more prosperously, than we could possibly have done had we been left to our own resources. The result of our united labours was a purse of nearly two hundred pounds; and now came the more pleasant part of our duty — the distribution of alms, at a season when poverty is most severely felt, to the most deserving of the most needy.

The distribution took place a few days after the collection was finished. In the interim, blank tickets had been distributed to such of the donors as chose to receive them, upon which they inscribed the names of the poor persons whom they recommended for relief. The vestry where we were elected was the scene of the distribution. The body of the church was allotted for the accommodation of the poor ticket-holders,

who formed a numerous and a very motley crowd, and who were called in to receive their dole in rotation, by the ward-beadle, from a list which he had prepared. I suspect, however, that the system of rotation was not very rigidly observed, inasmuch as half-a-dozen women, with squalling children in their arms, were among the very first who were called in and dealt with, by which means something like peace and quietness were obtained while the claims of the crowd of the remaining applicants were severally considered. What followed was a very different affair from that which transpires weekly at the parish pay-table. I have been churchwarden, overseer, and guardian of various parishes in my time, and I have seen the poor in all conditions and under all circumstances, and I thought I knew them well enough; but I derived a new lesson now, and learned that it is possible for humanity to undergo the direst misfortunes without losing heart and hope — to drain the cup of misery to the dregs without becoming utterly selfish — and to be long immersed in the lowest depths of necessity, and yet be human still. I shall describe one or two of these hapless claimants upon the benevolence of their wealthy fellow citizens, premising that a few of them only are the recipients of parish pay. They see no disgrace, perhaps, in participating in a voluntary alms, because it is voluntary, and, as such, cannot be regarded as the peculiar property of that numerous class who assert and maintain a life-interest in compulsory funds legally levied for their support.

One of the first who seemed to attract general sympathy was an old, old man, trembling on the very verge of the grave, who had outlived almost every faculty of mind and body. He could walk only by instinct, advancing his foot mechanically, to save himself from falling when he was pushed gently forwards. When standing, he could not seat himself — and when sitting, he could not get up without help. In whatever posture he was placed, there he remained. Altoge-

ther insensible to question and remark, he looked wildly round upon us, and smiled, and winked with both eyes. These were his sole remaining capabilities — to wink, and to look agreeable. He had been recommended as an object worthy of charity by a liberal donor, and he was brought in person to justify the recommendation. He was clean, and neat and tidily dressed, but evidently in a state of perfect unconsciousness of everything around him. He had lived once, but it was in times long passed and gone: you might guess him to be what age you chose, but you could hardly think him older than he was; time, who had stolen his faculties, had forgotten to wreck the casket that contained them; the spirit of life had left its tenement, and, by some strange mistake, the animated machine had gone on without it. My neighbour, the watchmaker, compared him to a clock with the striking-train run down, and the works rusty beyond repair. He could not thank us for the alms we gave him, but he did all he could — he winked, and smiled, and tried to make a bow, but failed in the attempt, and resigned himself cheerfully to the care of his friends, who carried him off.

Another quiet applicant was a lady, whose natural-born gentility poverty might obscure but could not conceal. Years of want and struggling deprivation had dimmed her charms; but they had neither bowed nor bent her stately form, nor quenched the inherent virtue of self-respect, nor deprived her of the correct and appropriate diction, and the winning and courteous expression which once graced a drawing-room. She was introduced to us by the beadle as Lady W——; and although draped in very humble and well-worn apparel, she looked what she was — a gentlewoman in every sense of the word; though beyond an empty title, she possessed hardly anything in the world. She answered our inquiries with a natural courtesy, which at least some of us felt to be a condescension. "Gentlemen," she said, "it is true, as your at-

tendant states, that I am a lady. In my youth, I married a titled man. I make no boast of that — it was, indeed, my misfortune. I was brought up and educated to occupy a station inferior to few: I filled that station for many years; it is not for me to say how appropriately; and though calamity has overtaken me now, and I have been familiar with necessity for so long a time, yet I feel that I am a lady still. I may be reproached with poverty, and that I can bear; but I trust I shall never be justly reproached with having fallen to the level of my circumstances. I am grateful to you for the assistance you so kindly render me; and I can express that sentiment, and feel it deeply, too, without humiliation, because the aid you supply is as voluntary on your part as its acceptance is necessary on mine." When our foreman had instinctively wrapped the donation awarded to her in a quarter sheet of letter-paper, and presented her with it, she bent with a dignified obeisance, and silently withdrew.

A third applicant, worthy of a passing notice, was a lady of a very different stamp. Who or what she had been in former years, I could not ascertain, but she appeared before us in the character of a middle-aged mince-pie monomaniac, and jam-tart amateur. The poor harmless creature was clad in the veriest shreds of dusky feminine attire, which barely shielded her limbs from the inclemency of the weather. She had a notion that she, too, was a lady, and that, being a lady, she was bound to live by the consumption of pastry and nothing else. We were admonished by our custodian that whatever amount we awarded her, whether it were much or little, would be forthwith consigned to the confectioner, in exchange for mince-pies and tarts of the very best quality; and I regret to say, that this announcement had the effect of reducing considerably the sum she derived from the charity of the ward, and effectually preventing the consummation of any very formidable débauch with her favourite viands. But the poor

simpleton was as merry as she was innocent and harmless; and all unsuspicious of the latent grudge which had lessened her gratuity, tripped hastily off, to enjoy at least a delicious repast.

After we had sat some hours, a very distressing case was brought forward. A poor woman, the wife of a working-man, and the mother of a young family, had been deserted by her husband, who had left her, besides her own children, the charge of his bedridden parents. Under this accumulation of burdens, she had been heroically struggling for some months, in the vain attempt, by her single energies, to ward off the approach of want, and to act at the same time the part of nurse to the old couple. She had succeeded in a great measure, and modestly sought but a little help to enable her to persevere in her arduous undertaking.

Then came an old man, verging on fourscore, the very *beau ideal* of the merchant's serving-man of the last century. He had once been comparatively prosperous; but, judging from his cheerful face, perhaps hardly ever happier than he was now. For fifty years of his life he had been *custos* and confidential housekeeper to a well-known firm, which, after four or five generations of unvarying prosperity, had sunk in the panic of 1846 into the gulf of bankruptcy. In the general wreck that followed, old Benjamin was forgotten, or remembered only with a pang of unavailing regret. He found a refuge, however, in some small garret, where he contrives to preserve his cheerfulness and his pigtail, the only outward and visible sign of his former respectability, and where he acts as master of the ceremonies to a clique of ancient ladies, his fellow-lodgers, to whom he is at once the guardian and the beau of the fourth floor. When he had received his own little modicum of benevolence, he pleaded hard for the immediate settlement of the claim of one of his fair *coterie*, a widow of fourscore and five; and finding that his request could not be

complied with, but that she must be left till her turn came, he retired to a corner of the room, and waited a full hour and more, until her business was settled, when he bowed ceremoniously, till his pigtail pointed to the zenith, and tendering his arm, escorted her home with all the vivacity and politeness of the days of hoops and high-heeled shoes. I have scarcely found out the reason why it was that the spectacle of this happy, kind old soul made me feel a little, only a little, ashamed of myself.

This cosy old couple had hardly tripped out of sight, when our prosy synod was honoured by the advent of a real and extraordinary phenomenon. This was nothing less than a ragged, crazy improvisatrice, who advanced, full of jingling rhymes, which she delivered with a volubility perfectly startling. She had evidently the highest idea of her poetical qualifications, and discharged her couplets in a perfect shower upon us, not a little to the astonishment of myself and a few other strangers to her overpowering genius. The beadle quietly endeavoured to moderate the flow of her eloquence; but she denounced him as a "sorry Jack" for his pains, and was going on at a tremendous rate, rhyming Jack with back, thwack, crack, whack, &c. &c., when she was called to order in a manner that admitted of no demur—"Mrs. Margaret Maggs," roared the beadle; and the tenth Muse, brought to a sudden stand-still, ceased her oracular utterances, and, grasping her modicum of shining silver, vanished from the presence.

The distribution lasted the whole of the day; and it was a weary day for some of the poor applicants, whose turns came last, and who almost fainted for want of refreshment. But all who deserved it, went home effectually relieved and gladdened; and many who did not, got a lesson upon the occasion, and learned that Charity is not always as blind as she is supposed to be. The whole of the money collected is not distributed at once. About a third part of the amount is reserved

until the approach of the next ensuing winter, when a second distribution takes place, generally to the same applicants.

I have heard it insinuated before now, that city functionaries of all sorts are prone to take good care of themselves, whenever they meet to consider the wants of the poor. I may perhaps be allowed to say, that when we have a feast, we pay for it; and that not one farthing of any collection made in the City for the poor was ever, to my knowledge, appropriated to any other purpose. As a respectable man, I, for one, would never countenance any intromission of that kind.

A FROST PIECE — ST. JAMES'S PARK.

It is a day of hard frost, about the middle of February, and the hour is near noon; in the country the air would be clear, with the exception of the few drifting snow-flakes which the east wind drives in fantastic courses ere they settle on the ground; but in London, though there is no fog, the smoke refuses to rise far above the level of the house-tops; and, congealed by the breath of winter, wraps every distant object in a semi-transparent curtain. We happen to be out for a ramble in the neighbourhood of Charing-cross, and gathering from certain unmistakeable indications, in the shape of new skates curiously crossed with virgin straps, and dangling from the hands of gentlemen about town, that the ice in St. James's Park will bear, we take a short cut through Spring-gardens, and in a few minutes are standing upon the banks of the "ornamental water," a spectator of the winter sport of the Londoner. The park presents a singular picture, not wanting in features of grandeur and beauty, but having these somewhat comically contrasted with human peculiarities and oddities. The noble trees, stretching aloft their myriads of tiny hands to catch the falling snow flakes, stand vividly depicted in all their naked beauty against the leaden sky; or farther on, half veiled in the wintry mist, show like imploring spectres in the act of vanishing from mortal vision. Away on the right, the Queen's palace looms dimly in the white haze, bearing the unsubstantial aspect of a monster erection of thin

grey and translucent tissue-paper, which a bird might pierce in its flight, or a breath might dissipate. The few houses that are visible through the heavy atmosphere are magnified to an abnormal size, and look like the shadowy structures of a by-gone time, or the colossal edifices eclipsed in the gloom of some of Martin's pictures. As we look around, the clock of the Horse-guards rings out the hour of noon, in notes so loud, clear, and close to the ear, that we are startled into the recognition of that national establishment, which, for all we can see of it, might be a hundred miles away.

We find the banks of the lake thronged with spectators of both sexes, and all ages and classes; among which, however, greatly predominate the boys and the hobbledehoys, who make up so important a part of the London population. They are the first in every crowd, for whatever purpose it may assemble; and the first in every dangerous exploit, whether anything is to be got by it or not. Their presence on this occasion may serve to explain certain phenomena observable upon the banks and upon the frozen surface of the water. It is for their especial enlightenment that the poles surmounted with a board marked "dangerous" are set up—an admonition which, notwithstanding, they never take in good part. They invariably prefer testing the ice themselves, by walking on to it, or under it, as may happen: and it is for the sake of checking this precocious spirit of experiment, that the edge of the ice all round the lake has been broken every morning since the frost set in, by men appointed for the purpose; and hence it is that now, when it *will* bear, bridges of plank have to be laid down that they may get on and off. You may observe, likewise, that ropes are laid across the ice from one bank to the other, in readiness to be drawn instantly to any part that may give way. The surface of the ice looks anything but tempting to a person not enamoured of its glittering aspect. It is starred with huge cracks, stretching sheer across the basin, and in some parts is flooded with water, welling up from broad holes; but in spite of that, it is

crowded with occupants eager in the pursuit of pleasure or of business, and all making the most of the few short hours of light afforded by the winter's day. Our parti-coloured friends and familiars, the poor ducks, geese, didappers, and foreign fowls of all sorts, not forgetting those *raræ aves*, the black swans, have got the worst of it just now: their impudence is completely frozen out of them, and, to all appearance, their animosity too; for there they are yonder, all confined to one small pool broke for them by the humanity of the lodge-keeper, and wagging their variegated and thickly-feathered tails. Hard weather has taught them good behaviour, and misfortune, as it often does, has reconciled their feuds, and shown them that it may be politic to be birds of one family even though they are not of one feather.

While admiring the graceful evolutions of some of the practised skaters, who seem to fly on the wings of the wind, and to be guided by the action of the will rather than the force of muscular exercise, we cannot help being struck with what appears to us a most undesirable change in the fashion of skating affected in the present day. When the young Benjamin West exhibited his Adonis-like form upon the Serpentine to the supreme admiration of our grandmothers, we are very sure that he had too true and fine a sense of the graceful to be seen for a moment in the attitude which *now* is esteemed the perfection of the accomplishment. Every skater now-a-days who has learned to feel his feet upon the ice, aspires apparently to emulate the motion of the crab, and esteems it the climax of the art to be able to skate backwards, twisting his neck in such a way as to enable him to see behind him. Think of a man travelling five or six hundred yards in the act of sitting down, and alternately grinning over either shoulder lest he should come in contact with another performing the same preposterous feat! We turn from such an exhibition to yonder gentlemanly sample of the old school: he has employed a man to sweep a small space clear for him, not more than a dozen feet square, and on that he

occupies himself in cutting various small figures, all evidently devised originally to afford at once healthful exercise to the body and graceful postures for the limbs. He is a veteran in the art, and his motions are as easy as those of a gold fish in a glass globe.

While we are enjoying his gratuitous display, it is suddenly interrupted by the apparition of Mr. Straddles, from Westminster, who being this morning screwed to a pair of skates for the first time, on which he is only able to support himself by the aid of a couple of stout walking sticks, is obliged to go wherever they choose to take him; and when they cannot agree upon that point, which, as he has a habit of turning out his toes, they never do long together, is obliged to come sprawling to the ground. There he goes again, with a flump! that's the twentieth time that his heels have been on a level with his head this morning; but no matter, he is picked up again in a twinkling by a brace of stipendiary sweepers, who have charge of him; and he swims, straddles, staggers, and sprawls off again. Here comes a costermonger who has been out crying "live soles" ever since he left Billingsgate at six o'clock, before it was light. He invested sixpence in a pair of broken skates last night, and having levied the straps from his donkey-harness, is come to disport himself with the gentry for an hour or two. Yonder are a couple of mannikins, who having equal rights in a single pair of skates, and not being able to agree as to priority of claim, have divided the object of dispute and taken one each: they tumble about in emulation of each other; and the first who shall tire of the pummeling he gets, will surrender to the other the instrument of torture. Here comes, bareheaded to the weather, without a shirt to his back, and only a couple of shreds of shoes to his feet, a characteristic specimen of the nomadic population of London's vilest districts. Poor Josh the cadger, though his stomach is empty as his back is bare, and though he has neither skates to skate with, nor soles to his shoes to slide with, yet loves the ice with the instinct of his race, and must take his pleasure

upon it. A lump of ice is all the apparatus he demands, and with one foot, whose red toes peep out from the worn-out shoe, fixed firmly upon that, he propels himself forward with the other, shouting with the pleasurable excitement, and as insensible to the sharp arrows of the east wind as he is, alas! to the duties and obligations of a life whose tenth winter finds him proof against all outward assaults.

But it is worth while to turn our attention to the *business* part of the affair. Wherever in London pleasure is sought, there business waits upon the seekers, and even though there be but a chance of turning a penny, the chance is not thrown away, and the penny is turned if possible. Hence we have here, on the ice in St. James's Park, professionals of various kinds doing a trade and earning small gains under circumstances in which a provincial would hardly think of gain at all. First, here is the skate-jobber: he has brought a long bench, upon which he displays a score or two of pairs of skates, of various value, and which he hires out by the hour, at a charge of from four-pence to a shilling. He screws them into your Wellingtons, and straps them on to your feet, and when you have deposited their value with him, not for fear that you, being a gentleman, should run away with them, but merely to insure himself from the accident of your getting under the ice, in which case your executors might demur to his claim; then, having the cash in hand, he leaves you to glide at your pleasure wherever you choose. He makes hay, not when the sun shines, but when the east wind blows and the snow falls; and as he nets a few pounds in a good day, he would soon make a competence were the winters as durable here as they are in Holland. Next to the skate-jobber is the poor but handy fellow, who, having no capital, is proprietor of a chair or two and a gimlet, and who is glad to earn twopence by fastening on the skates of gentlemen who provide their own. When you have paid your twopence you are free of his chair, and may rest upon it whenever it is unoccupied and you are so disposed. Then come the sweep-

ers; these are numerous, and if much snow be falling they have no sinecure: they sweep up the snow in a central mound, round which the skaters keep up a constant race: the contributions they levy are perfectly voluntary; but their services are of too much value to pass unrewarded. Even if there be no snow, the ice becomes in a short time so cut up by the skaters as to render their brooms indispensible. They are a numerous fraternity, and each one of them has abandoned a crossing in some public thoroughfare, to enjoy the combination of pleasure and business upon the frozen surface of the water. Next comes the strap-merchant: he is fringed around with dangling thongs of leather terminating in metal buckles, and his appearance is especially welcome to the proprietor of an old mildewed pair of skates, which, having been thrown by without cleaning after last winter's usage, will not submit to be buckled on without some portion at least of new harness. His stock-in-trade brings him a thumping profit, because he charges in a ratio settled by the necessities of the purchaser, rather than by the cost of production. His wares have a very suspicious resemblance to garters, under which denomination, in all likelihood, he retails them upon *terra firma*. And now a cheerful voice rings out in the frosty air, "Brandy-balls—balls—balls! Here you are! Brandy-balls, four a penny! Hot spiced gingerbread—the raal sort—hot as fire!" This orator, who is an old soldier, is the dispenser of the only sort of refreshment to be obtained on the ice; and he is a contraband dealer who has smuggled his goods into the park, where no traffic is allowed, though in the present instance it is not thought worth while to interfere with him. His "brandy-balls" are a kind of globular sweetmeats, totally innocent of alcohol, which is represented by an extra dose of peppermint and perhaps a flavour of cayenne; and his hot spiced nuts are a species of gingerbread, in the composition of which the ginger is out of all proportion with the bread—a single mouthful being enough to inflame your palate for the rest of the day. So soon as he makes his appearance, the lads

flock round him with their pence, but a warning crack of the ice beneath their united weight scatters them like chaff, and, the old soldier first setting the example, there is a general run upon the bank, where he can do business in security, and soon disposes of the contents of his tray.

By this time the surface of the ice is crowded to an extent altogether incompatible with the safety of the multitude, and hundreds more are hurrying to get on. The long slides are covered with straddling figures from one end to the other, and the skaters have gradually formed into an endless chain, which wheels round the whole area of the lake, at a few yards from the shore. The spectacle, though animated enough, is not very pleasant to look upon. The tent of the Royal Humane Society, where all the appliances for restoring suspended animation are ready for immediate use, suggests unpleasant associations. Numbers of the Society's men perambulate the banks ready for an emergency, which it is but too plain they are anticipating. Beneath the pressure of perhaps nine or ten thousand persons darting rapidly about in every direction, the surface of the ice bends and waves and undulates like the gentle swell of a summer sea. Suddenly an awful noise, comparable to no other natural sound that we know of, proclaims that the impending calamity has taken place; it produces a general panic, during which there is a simultaneous rush to the shore, and the tumult on the ice is at an end, while all run eagerly to that part of the ground which commands the nearest view of the disaster. On turning our eyes in that direction, we are aware that a large section of the ice has given way, and that from ten to twenty individuals, submerged up to their necks, are holding on to its sharp edges, to keep themselves from sinking. One of them has a friend skating near him, and who makes an effort to rescue him. First he plucks the silken tie from his neck, and coming as near as he dares, tries to throw it within reach of his friend; but the wind is against him, and blows it away. Then he tears off one of his skates, fastens that to the necker-

chief, and swings it within the grasp of the imperilled lad; now, with a long and steady pull, he strives to hoist him out, and has nearly succeeded when the frail silk breaks, and the poor fellow sinking over head and ears with a plunge is lost to view. But he rises again, shaking his head like a water-dog, and repeats the experiment: again it fails, and again he falls back into the icy flood. The third time, while, amid the encouraging cheers of the spectators, he is on the point of succeeding, the ice upon which his friend is standing gives way, and the two friends, now both submerged together, present their rueful faces over the edge of the ice, and beckon for assistance from shore. While this has been going on, some few have already been extricated by means of ropes prudently laid across the ice in expectation of a demand for them. But now the Society's boat, a light, broad, flat-bottomed tub, is seen rapidly advancing in the distance, propelled by a man who runs in its rear. Now it crashes over the edge of the ice, as the man who has it in charge throws himself into it, and it is floating buoyantly in the midst of the drowning skaters. In two or three minutes they are all lugged safe on board, and the boat, now heavily freighted, is pulled by ropes to the shore, splintering the ice like glass in its passage, and cheered by cries of "Bravo!" and the clapping of twenty thousand palms that line the banks, as though the whole thing were a dramatic spectacle got up for the public amusement; occasionally, however, the drama is turned into a tragedy, and the unhappy skater sinks before the eyes of the multitude to rise no more in life.

The half-drowned patients become inmates of the Royal Humane Society's tent, where those that require it are put into a hot bath, and otherwise medicated until they are in a fit condition to be delivered over to their friends. A dose of extra strong stimulants enables a man of good constitution, who has not been long submerged, to walk home and take care of himself; while it not unfrequently happens that another who escaped drowning through the timely aid of the Society

shall die from the results of the accident ere the leaves are upon the trees. The number of persons thus rescued from almost certain death during the frosts of a long winter by the instrumentality of this society alone, is something almost incredible. We have ourselves seen from thirty to forty pulled out in one day. The unlettered cockney looks upon all this as a matter of course; he seems to think that he has an undisputed right to risk his life if he choose, and that the Royal Humane Society "have a right" to save if they can, as a matter of business, and that accounts are square between them.

One would think that the moral effect of such an event as we have above described would be to deter the spectators of it from incurring such a risk in their own persons: and so it is, for five or perhaps ten minutes — but not much longer. Hardly a quarter of an hour has elapsed since the rescue of their companions, and again the fascination of the ice has lured its votaries to the much-loved sport. As the day wanes the cold intensifies — the sloppy surface becomes frozen hard, and with this favouring circumstance, the sport goes on with greater vivacity than ever. It must, however, cease with the darkness, which closes in rapidly. The sweepers are the first to disappear; there is no longer any chance of coppers, and the poor fellows have been so long fasting, that they will be glad to exchange the few they have picked up for something substantial in the shape of a meal. The skate-jobber, who is threshing his own shoulders to keep them warm, must stay till his last customer is satisfied, which may not be till the laggards are warned off by the gate-keepers, when, as the park has to be closed for the night, all must clear out. The sharp wind has cleared the evening sky of clouds; the moon in her second quarter gleams palely aloft; and the amateurs of skating, as they button up their great-coats, and turn up the collars about their ears, hug themselves with the agreeable conviction that "it will be a pelting hard frost to-night, and the ice will be as firm as brass to-morrow."

A DESERTED VILLAGE IN LONDON.

Upon the site of what was once known as Toot Hill, or Tuttle, or Tote-Hill, and more lately as Tothill Fields—fields long since dead as mummies, and shrouded in mortar and buried in bricks, stood the village whose abandonment and transformation we have to deplore. It is unaccountable to us that though we lived in that village during many happy years of our youth, and though numbers must be yet alive who shared with us in the ill-assorted but characteristic mixture of the rural and the urban which thirty years ago rendered the spot in some respects an oasis in the great dry desert of London—yet the writers on the topography of the metropolis and its environs, from old Maitland, in whose time we have reason to believe it had existed for some years, down to Peter Cunningham, F.S.A., the clever and indefatigable author of Mr. Murray's burly red-coated hand-book, appear one and all to have ignored its unobtrusive being. Of the Tothill Fields, which in very old times were part and parcel of a manor of Westminster belonging to John Maunsell, a chancellor of England, they afford us abundance of information. Here the wealthy chancellor entertained King Henry the Third and his retinue in large tents—his hospitality being so much bigger than his house, that one-half of his guests could not get within the walls. Here the "wagers of battel" were decided, by which, in feudal times, rival claims to privilege and property were settled by the arbitrement of war—when learned judges and royal potentates, as

well as the untaught populace, imagined that God would defend the right, and punish the wrong-doer,—always supposing that neither of the combatants, prior to entering the lists, had had recourse to "anie inchantement, sorcerie, or witchcraft, whereby the word of God might be inleased or diminished, and the devil's power encreased!" Either champion was obliged to make solemn oath in the presence of the sovereign and the judges, that he had in nowise resorted to any such "parlous devices" to secure success, before the right divine was accorded him of hewing his adversary in pieces with the sword, if he was of *gentle* blood, or of knocking his brains out after having well battered his hide with a cudgel, if he happened to be a serf or villein. This point settled, and fair play established, to it they went, with full confidence in the sanction of an overlooking Providence, never doubting for a moment that the "author of peace and lover of concord" mingled in the fray, and gave the victory to the rightful claimant! Here it was that, after the Parliamentary victory of Worcester, which lost the miserable Charles his crown and his life, twelve hundred Scotch soldiers who had been taken prisoners in the battle, and slaughtered subsequently in cold-blood, were buried in a hollow, and sixty-seven loads of soil, at the cost to the commonwealth of thirty shillings, laid upon their graves. It was here, too, in the seventeenth century, that dissatisfied gentlemen resorted in search of that peculiar kind of satisfaction, which honourable minds contrived to distil from such grim ingredients as gunpowder and lead and cold steel. As the place became gradually built over, it grew less convenient for these private rencontres. Gentlemen could not fight in comfort in a vulgar atmosphere, and such satisfactory meetings were transferred, as most of our readers know, to the back of Montague House, to Chalk Farm, north of the city, and to other places classical in the history of gentleman-slaughter.

But our village, in our time, was a peaceful village; and we must proceed, now that it is no more, to trace out, if we

can, its past history, and to restore it to the comprehension of the reader, such at least as it was in our own youthful days. All that we know of its origin may be comprised in a very few words. It was about the middle of the seventeenth century, that one James Palmer, a bachelor of divinity, and a worthy and charitable man, founded an almshouse for the reception of twelve poor men and women, to each of whom he gave a perpetual annuity of six pounds and a chaldron of coals. In connection with the almshouses, he also erected a school for the gratuitous education of twenty boys, who were to be taught to "read, write, and account;" and there was a master provided who had a salary of twelve pounds yearly, as well as a yearly chaldron of coals, and a new gown every other year. The founder further erected a chapel for the use of the pensioners and scholars, in which, during the latter years of his life, he himself preached to and prayed with them twice every day. The almshouse and the school, in which the aged were housed and fed, the young educated, and both had the gospel preached to them, were, as far as we have been able to ascertain, the nucleus around which "Palmer's Village" rose into being. In those days Tothill, or Toot-hill Side, was a gentle rise of verdant ground sloping pleasantly away towards the country, at a distance of something less than a mile westward of the old abbey of Westminster. It is pleasant to imagine hedge-rows and country stiles, and winding walks through the fields between them, and the almshouses with the little chapel with its congregation of two-and-thirty souls standing at first alone in the meadows, and to watch with "the mind's eye" the building of the first humble cottage beneath their walls, and then the gradual dotting of the greensward with the homes of the labouring poor, until the straggling irregular group of dwellings had clustered by degrees into something like a hamlet, and gained itself a name, and men began to call it "Palmer's Village" in honour of the founder of the charity around which it grew. But these are things we can only imagine,

and for the truth or falsity of which no man now is in a condition to vouch. Long before we knew it the advancing tide of brick and mortar had closed around the little village, and locked it up in the far-spreading embrace of the great Babylon, where, though hemmed in all around by crowded streets, dark narrow lanes and fetid courts, it yet retained many of the rural charms of its primal condition. It had yet a village green, though the narrow strip of dusty grass which justified the appellation was finally trodden out under our own eyes; and on the green, every first of May, up rose, reared by invisible hands in the night, the village May-pole, round which we have seen the lads and lasses dancing to the music of their own laughter. It had an old-fashioned way-side inn, the Prince of Orange; well we remember it, and its merry-faced and active little landlord, Wiggins, who never would be still, and never could be sad, but with a perennial laugh on his lips and a joke on his tongue, welcomed the weary traveller to cheap and wholesome refreshment. Then there was Mrs. Wiggins who lived in the bar, and of whom nobody ever saw more than the head and shoulders — who was the living personification of a "portrait of a lady" three-quarter size, with a back-ground of bottles and decanters, and strange old-fashioned glasses, and dark blue specimens of Lilliputian china brought from beyond sea, and that identical "brown jug" which "was once Toby Philpot," and a long-necked vial of some mysterious cordial of her own concoction, the contents of which were not to be bought with money, but freely gurgled forth when sorrow-struck poverty sought the hospitality of the Prince, or accident laid a poor neighbour on the shelf. It is to be supposed that Mrs. Wiggins did sometimes evacuate the bar, but during all the years of our residence in the village we never had the good fortune to see her at full length — and sure we are that the bottles and the shelves must have cut but a melancholy figure, lacking the sunshine of her laughter-lighted countenance. The Prince of Orange was a model of a village inn, as village inns are found in rural

districts: it stood away from the road, retired modestly a few paces from the footpath: reared aloft on a strong squared beam, the Protestant Prince, baton in hand, swung backwards and forwards under the impulse of the wind, but being painted both sides alike on the pendulous board, he never turned his back on the public, and therein he was a faithful prototype of the landlord and landlady, who were ever to be found at their respective posts. Had he fallen down he would in all likelihood have pitched head foremost into the horse-trough, which, always full of pellucid water, ran along beneath him; but that was an event not to be thought of in a Protestant country, and of course it never happened. The house itself appeared at the first glance to be three parts roof, the long sloping grey tiles of which came down within seven feet or so to the ground, so that a man might reach them with his hand; but beneath that homely crust the way-worn traveller found order and cleanliness, wholesome fare, the whitest linen, and ready and cheerful service — and all at an honest price. We speak of the inn as it existed thirty years ago. What transformations it underwent before it finally vanished from the face of the earth we are in no condition to recount.

Next to the inn, if indeed it ought not to rank before it, the most remarkable feature in our metropolitan village was *the* shop. Of what goes to the constitution of a village shop, such as that was in our day, and such as multitudes of others are at the present hour in remote country districts, the Londoner born within the sound of Bow Bells has for the most part not the remotest idea. The village shop cannot keep its head above water unless it monopolise the commerce of the whole neighbourhood. It is grocer and tea-dealer, and stationer and bookseller, and draper and haberdasher, and chemist and druggist, and jeweller and ironmonger, and seedsman and toyman, and egg-merchant and butterman — and though it be neither butcher, nor baker, nor tailor, yet it kills a periodical pig and sells country pork, and retails fancy loaves, biscuits and bricks (crusty), and slop coats and

trowsers and gaiters and overalls, and a hundred things besides; in short, it does the work of Cheapside, Holborn, and the Strand, in a commercial way, all under one roof, for its own peculiar population. Such was *the* shop of our village in days of yore. Who was its prosperous proprietor we cannot recal to mind, and we are loth in this veritable narrative to instal any apocryphal Mr. Jones or Mrs. Brown in a dignity to which they have no just claim. The shop itself still lives in our memory as the seat of much merchandise and more gossip, and there are yet a few pages of closely written foolscap in our possession, which, under the denomination of bill-paper, we bought at its counter to serve as the record of some of our earliest lucubrations. We do not pretend that this one was the only shop in the village; it had a baker who was nothing but a baker, and a butcher who was nothing but a butcher, and both of them had shops of their own. Then there was the dress-maker who made a shop of her parlour window, where, having not yet learned to believe in gas, she stuck a single candle in the long winter nights to show the delicate beauties of a mob-cap and gophered collar; and where she exhibited a notice, "Crimping done here," and displayed the identical crimping-machine, consisting of a couple of cogged brass cylinders, hollow for the reception of hot-irons, and turned by a small wooden handle affixed to the frame-work — with which the mysterious process was accomplished. She was a tall and almost incredibly thin personage, with no shoulders and sharp cheek bones, and a wandering eye; she had the character of haughtiness with her customers, who were mostly servant maids. Mrs. Wiggins, who had a good word as well as a cordial for everybody, once described her in our hearing as "a good soul enough, but very unbending;" which, by the way, was not a precisely exact description if taken literally — seeing that Miss Gandy, that was the dress-maker's name, did bend a little, only it was backwards and not forwards; in aspiring to the character of an upright woman she had attained to that and something beyond it.

Her familiar friends called her Mrs. Gandy; the implied Mr. G. was however nothing more than a complimentary fiction; the dress-maker had never married, but she had passed the uncertain limit of a "certain age," and the matrimonial appellative was due to her mature appearance, and perhaps, who knows? was a balm to her feelings.

Then there was the village tailor, a sharp-nosed, fiery-eyed man of unknown proportions, seeing that we never beheld him elsewhere than at his open window, where he sat all day long, with a couple of pale-faced urchins at his side, upon a board level with the sill, cross-legged like a Turk, and stitching with his needle or singeing with his goose from one year's end to the other. We don't know how it came to pass, whether it was owing to the ferocious expression upon the man's face, or what —but certain it is that we identified him in imagination, from the very first, with the cruel tailor of Delhi, who stuck his needle into the elephant's trunk, and got a shower-bath of dirty water for his pains. He was the very man to have done such a thing, and we felt certain that if at any time an elephant out for a walk had happened to wander that way, and to have turned an inquiring snout into Rosser's open window, Rosser would have stuck his needle in it, as sure as fate: it wasn't in him to have helped it. So we never think of the resentful elephant of Delhi without thinking, too, of Rosser and his two pale-faced apprentices, and that shining sleeve-board and hot-smelling goose, and the dreadful contortions of countenance which their master used to exhibit when engaged in the ticklish experiment of covering a blind button with a jacket of stiff corduroy.

As we stand gazing in at the tailor's open window we hear, with memory's ear, the metallic sound of the broad hammer of the blacksmith. "The brawny blacksmith bangs broad bars for bread" just round the corner: he is a short, sturdy fellow, and, like most members of his trade, strong and of a massive build, with a beard which has been growing ever since last Saturday night, and a pair of shaggy eye-brows,

beneath which a couple of fat eyes wink and glimmer like sparks from his forge. He can hammer out a horse-shoe in, we forget exactly how many minutes, or fractions of a minute; and he is known through all Westminster among the hackney-coachmen and grooms, as a cheap, safe, and expeditious hand, at a horse's foot. He is strong enough, as the village barber says, to make a show of, and can bend a crown piece and straighten it again, with his fingers; and could knock your life out with a blow of his fist if he chose, only he doesn't choose anything of the sort, being tender-hearted, and fond of children and pet birds, and lop-eared rabbits, and everything or anything that is weak and helpless. You should see him lay aside his work and forge a new tooth for a peg-top, to pacify a whimpering boy, the child of a neighbour, who has disabled his toy by rough usage, and note how tenderly with his hard hands he wipes away the tears from the child's face, ere he sends him off exulting to his playfellows. It is one of nature's compensations, that such formidable Samsons as our village blacksmith are rarely found without some touch of tenderness in their composition, which tames their wild strength, even when, from the untoward circumstances of their life, the influence of education is not brought to bear upon them. Our blacksmith, though he can barely read a chapter in the Testament, and keeps all his accounts with a piece of chalk and the back of his smithy door, is a practical musician, and you may hear him of a Sunday afternoon hammering out upon a set of pendent bells, the psalm tunes he has heard at Westminster Abbey in the morning; and you will hear too, if you listen long, that he has a family around him who are chiming in with very faint and juvenile voices, which gladden his heart as he enjoys his weekly holiday.

We have mentioned the barber. Our barber is, however, not exactly a barber—not to the manner born, or bred. He is an old soldier with a pension of twelve pounds a year, who has resigned the sword and assumed the razor. He rarely shaves except on a Saturday, and then, as he remarks, he

reaps a very sandy crop, and is obliged to cultivate a peculiar kind of razor to reap it at all. The rest of his time he employs in strop-making, with which he does, it is said, a good stroke of business. He travels the city every Monday, carrying his wares in a bag, which he generally contrives to bring home empty in his pocket. He is hand and glove with the Wigginses, so he is in fact with everybody, and executes all their commissions in town; and it is observed that he always calls upon Miss Gandy on the morning of the day when he sets forth on his weekly tour. What is the nature of the business that he transacts for her, nobody knows: and he is never heard to breathe a syllable about it himself, which, by the way, is a sure sign that he is not a real barber.

Our village—the reader will remember we are carried back in spirit thirty years—our village has no doctor, no apothecary, no surgeon, though it is not wanting in patients, and, indeed, is a favourite resort of poor invalids and convalescents who cannot afford a better. Its doctor and surgeon and apothecary, we are bound to confess, is Westminster Hospital,* which stands not very far from the western boundary of the village, and within an easy walk for the out-patients. The hospital is one source of Wiggins's prosperity; he serves the daily beer ordered for the patients, and, at dinner-time and supper-time, is busy as a bee in filling a monstrous travelling-can, which he wheels himself to the hospital door, when it is lifted into the hall, and the nurses being in attendance, they are served in rotation. The patients receive, of course, what is prescribed for them by the medical men, and the household staff have what is allotted by the established dietary. It is reckoned an honour to serve the hospital, and it is a profit to the publican in more ways than one, inasmuch as that beverage which medical practitioners prescribe for their patients may be justly regarded by the public as what it professes to be—the genuine brewst of malt and hops. On a

* Westminster Hospital removed to the new building in Broad Sanctuary, at the eastern end of Tothill-street, in 1833.

fine summer's evening the out-patients of the hospital, not a few of whom have temporary lodgings in the village, may be seen sunning themselves at their doors, watching, with smiles on their wan faces, the children at play, and inhaling the fresh breeze that blows at sundown after the heat of the day. When the nurses have a holiday, they love to spend an hour in a visit to the village, and a gossip with their old protegés, the convalescent patients, with whom they exchange news of the world within and the world without the hospital.

Our village, in appearance, does not much resemble the rest of the brick and mortar paradise of London. Properly speaking, there are no regular streets in it; rows of houses, chiefly cottages, there are, but they do not stand face to face, like the two sides of a street proper — but face to back, like ranks of soldiers in a regiment; and it is thought that, like a regiment, they will be marched off the ground some day. There are little odd-shaped and triangular patches of ground here and there, which might perhaps, by a stretch of courtesy, be called streets; but nobody calls them streets—they are Palmer's Village, all of them, and nothing else—the post-master and the postman lump them all together, and the latter has to learn the whereabouts of each inhabitant, or if he can't find him to leave the letter at the Prince of Orange, where the correspondent will be sure to get it when he comes for his supper-beer. Most of the ground not required for traffic—and there is not very much of that—is laid out in gardens, which, though they have a rather dusty hue, abound in summer-time with the old English cottage flowers, the hollyhock, the polyanthus, the bloody-warrior, the cabbage-rose, the marigold, the sun-flower, all intermingled with flat beds of onions and vistas of kidney-beans and scarlet-runners. After a shower, when the rain has washed the dust off them, they look uncommonly bright and gay, and then there is a grateful perfume in the air not to be encountered in any other district in London, broad as it is. The gardens are well railed off, securely though in a homely way; if they were

not they would soon cease to be gardens, because the natives of our village are a good many of them descendants of certain patriarch goats, and pigs, and geese, and ducks, and bantam fowls, who came in with the early settlers, when there was plenty of grass land in the neighbourhood for their accommodation. From time immemorial their sires were free of the village, and though the several races have considerably diminished of late years, there are yet enough of them remaining to give the locality something like a farming aspect. The ducks yet contrive to pick up a living, partly helped by the remains of everybody's dinner which are daily thrown out to them, and partly by the care of the duckweed merchant, who makes his periodical rounds; it is they and the geese, we suspect, who have gradually eaten up the best part of the village green, of which the last straggling roots of grass are dying out. There is an old Billy goat, with a long beard, which ought to be grey, though it isn't, who is the progenitor of half the guardian goats in London. We say guardian goats, because there exists a superstition among the ostlers, grooms, and stable-keepers in London, by which goats of all grades enjoy protection and good treatment; it is supposed that the presence of a goat in a stable, or in that cancatenation of stables called a mews, secures all the horses there stabled from the attacks of certain diseases to which they would otherwise be liable. Hence Billy or Nanny is a pet in the stable-yard, and is so well fed and well used that he or she is familiar with all and afraid of nobody. Perhaps this superstition might be traced back to the old Mosaic ceremonial of the scape-goat of the wilderness—who can tell? We cannot say much in favour of the pigs; they are voted a nuisance, and seem to be conscious that they are not in good odour; but they are learned in their way, and know the map of Westminster as well as the postman. They invade Petty France, which is not half a mile off, every morning, and amidst the indescribable filth of that indescribably filthy district they grout and grunt and snuffle through the livelong day.

We have met the village pig before now as far away as the Broad Sanctuary, but we never knew of his losing his way, or failing to return at night to his supper and his sty. We must not omit all mention of the village cow; she is the last of her race, and always reminds us, by her melancholy face, of poor Io, who was vaccinated by Jupiter from fear of Juno's jealousy. She wanders about the village, turning a woe-begone countenance and lack-lustre eye this way and that in search of her lost calf; and to the tune of "New Milk from the Cow," bellowed in alt by Jerry Dings her owner, parts with the precious beverage, a ha'porth at a time, to the lovers of the genuine article. Poor thing! she is an impostor after all; the milk she gives is sheer sky-blue, and would no more yield a dish of cream than the veriest chalk and water concocted in the Seven Dials. But she cannot help it. She has never grazed a green field since her horns first budded; the cud she chews is composed of brewers' grains and musty hay, instead of the dewy daisied sward or croppings from the cowslip bank. She totters on her feet as she drags on her daily rounds, and is already resigned to inexorable fate, which, in the shape of a sausage-machine, is "looming in the distance."

But we must awake up from the visions of the past. The remorseless *now* puts its extinguisher upon these old recollections, and compels us, however unwilling, to record the decline and fall of what is now but an empire of dreams. The decline of Palmer's Village may date, if we mistake not, from the invention of cabs, which some few years before the hospital was removed to its new site, began to overrun the metropolis. The cabs and their struggling proprietors pitched, as if by instinct, upon the village and its patches of enclosable land, and by degrees monopolised a good part of the territory. Shed-built stables rose on the sites of the pleasant gardens—dung-heaps banished the bloom and the fragrance of the flowers—broken-kneed, broken-winded, glandered, blind, and spavined hacks supplanted the pigs and the poultry. With the cabs of course came cabmen, and with the cabmen

equally of course came late hours and midnight riot, and gin-drinking and squabbling. Then the hospital moved away, and the Prince of Orange lost his best customer; the village shop followed in its wake, and was transformed into a chemist and druggist's. Poor Miss Gandy took fright at the onset of the Jebus, and carried off her crimping machine to a quiet retreat in Pimlico. We ourselves stood it out as long as we could; and indeed Palmer's Village had been swallowed up and buried alive in unmitigated Westminster — the filth, moral and material, of the dirty world around had got possession of its sacred precincts, before we could find heart, like Dick Dowlas, to pack up our linen in a blue-and-white pocket handkerchief, and bid a final farewell to the pleasant home of our youth — at length a pleasant home no longer.

Since then we have wandered far and wide about the world, and done and suffered many things, about which we are not going to say anything here; and time has thinned our flowing hair, and grizzled what is left of it; and we have forgotten many things which it might have been as well to have remembered — but we have never forgotten, we could not forget, the old village. The other day — "last Wednesday was a week," as Boniface says, one of those pensive events which sometimes occur in the lives of all of us, the particulars of which we need not relate, sent us impromptu on an exploring expedition, to see what had become of Palmer's Village. The overland route from merry Islington, where it is our lot to dwell, is easily practicable by means of the "Favourite" omnibus, which, for the modest charge of four-pence, takes you up at Highbury, and drops you, after a wholesome shaking of four or five miles, within the shadow of Westminster Abbey, from whence a walk of twenty minutes takes you to the site of the subject of our paper. It was not without a gush of tenderness, and a twitching at the heart and the eyelids, that leaving the Abbey behind us, we plunged into the narrow, dirty throat of Tothill-street, where Southerne, the author of "Isabella" once dwelt, in a house yet standing — and where yet stands,

too, the "Cock public-house," which stood while the Abbey was re-building by Henry the Third—and proceeded on our way towards the once well-known spot. We might have saved ourselves the trouble and the pain. Arrived at the place where it ought to have been, not a vestige of it could we trace, but in its stead there ran a broad new road sheer through the heart of it, which had pushed the whole village out of its way in its unceremonious advance. The new road is almost upon a level with the roofs of the old cottages which are thrown down and their sites converted into building-ground, which, as everybody knows, is of all wildernesses the most desolate and forbidding.

"Pa'mer's Willidge," said a sallow-faced Westminsterian youth of whom we made inquiry; "there ain't no sich place as I knows on." And we were obliged to have recourse to a reverend elder who sat at the door of a marine store in a neighbouring street.

"Palmer's Village," said he, "why, your honour's the fust as has axed me that question for many a year; rek'let it? to be sure I do, man and boy fifty year and more. Why, bless your 'art, I don't think there's a bit on it left stannin'. Let me see; yes, there is though. You see them boords yander over the brick wall—that's a bit on it; but 'taint much you'll say; but you won't find no more on it, I reckon. 'Tis curous that you should ax arter it though."

"And what have they done with the Prince of Orange?"

"There ain't a lath on it left—all gone as clean as a whistle; but they're a buildin' a new un, a slap-up house to match wi' the new neighbourhood as is to be."

"And Mr. Wiggins—what is become of him?"

"There you has me hard! Wiggins didn't do kindly-like, arter his wife's death (she were a goodish soul, she were, a spry little ooman); and he gived up the Prince, and they do say he went to *Jar*sey, and died there; but I can't tell'ee for sartin."

"One question more—What became of the blacksmith?"

"What—that used to play the bells?"

"The same."

"Well, he can play the bells all day if he likes now. Why, he made a fortune out o' railway carriage buffers, or suth'n o' the sort, and he's quite a gemman now. I seen him four year agone a drivin' in a open carriage wi' a pair o' grey ponies over Westminster Bridge. *He's* all right anyhow, *I* should think."

And this was all the information we could obtain—the whole and sole record of the vanished village, of which not a trace beyond a few old walls, and rusty, mildewed hoardings remained. We strolled musingly about the deserted spot, over the piles of irregular earth and among the mounds of broken bricks and dried mortar; occupied the while in the anxious attempt to connect any, the slightest, vestige yet on the ground with our cherished associations of the past. It was not to be done. The home of some of our happiest years had been blotted out of the world; and its very memory must soon pass away from the earth, seeing that it lives in the recollections of few who care to remember it, and that no local historian has condescended to allot it a place in its pages.

This brief sketch will soon be all that survives of Palmer's Village; and perhaps it may be allowed to serve at once for its history and its funeral oration.

THE END.

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